

F O C H
The Man of Orleans
BY LIDDELL HART
II

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F O C H
The Man of Orleans

BY
LIDDELL HART

IN TWO VOLUMES : VOLUME TWO



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CHAPTER XVI

THE STORM BREAKS

WITH the coming of darkness on the evening of March 20th the patchy day-long ground mist deepened and spread into a thick fog that enveloped the downland of Picardy. Before the sun sank it had become a veiled red orb, as baleful and mysterious as the hush that settled along the battle front. The men in faded khaki with steel soup-plates on their heads who stood in one front line, a line now designedly reduced to a chain of observation posts, could see little and hear little. Over the shrouded span of No Man's Land soared and sank the years' unending, now unrevealing, chain of Very lights. But up the roads behind the other front line were marching innumerable columns of men in field grey with dark and heavy coal-scuttle helmets of steel that gave them the air of mailed ghosts from the Middle Ages.

At differing times during the hours before midnight a cryptic warning order—"Prepare for attack"—reached the troops who held the menaced front of Gough's Fifth Army, prolonged northward past Arras by Byng's Third Army. In so peaceful a stillness the message would have seemed incredible had not the stillness been so ominously unnatural. The hours of darkness now became hours of tense waiting.

Luckless those whose lot had cast them on this night to be in the observation line or in the forward line of resistance a few hundred yards farther back; luckier seemed, yet no luckier proved, those who were assigned to the circular redoubts that in successive layers to the rear, formed the battle stations of the battalion reserves and of the brigades in support.

These received the urgent message "Man battle stations" about half-past four on the chill morning of March 21st. They tumbled out of cellars and broken barns into the fog, now suddenly and fantastically riven by the multiple flash of exploding shells. More dangerous still was the stealthy pit-pat fall o

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countless gas-shells in the enveloping gloom. With the crash of over four thousand guns a storm broke over the British front which in grandeur of scale, of awe, and destruction, surpassed any other in the war.

For two hours the German guns concentrated on the British artillery positions and rear zones. Then, reinforced by mortars, the weight of the bombardment was brought back to the task of smashing the trenches to pulp. The ground quivered continuously, and spouting fountains of earth flew skyward, carrying human debris. The sunken trench floors were heaved up volcanically until the shell-holes themselves offered more cover than what had been trenches. Paralysed by the concussion, yet with nerves ever more on the rack, the survivors crouched unseeing and unheard. Almost all telephone cables were severed, wireless sets destroyed, while the fog made visual signals impossible even when the wan daylight came. Thus the front line was overpowered and overrun in many places without the fact being known to those in rear. Soon the redoubts were encircled by wraith-like forms, that cleverly infiltrated through the gaps and pushed more deeply onwards, leaving to fresh waves of field grey the task of submerging the islets of the defence.

The fortune of the fog favoured these new German tactics and by midday the British forward zone was swamped almost everywhere. But with midday came a lifting of the mist which had hitherto blindfolded the defending guns and machine-guns. When darkness came the battle zone was still unbroken along most of the front. But at three points on Gough's front the German tide percolated through, and in the fog that again enveloped the battlefield next morning these breaches crumbled more deeply and widely.

On the evening of the 22nd Gough ordered a general retirement to the line of the upper Somme. Once the fortified crust was broken, control lapsed. The very complexity of the system of communication built up during static warfare made the flux greater. In the confusion the bridge-heads at Péronne and Ham were lost, uncovering both Gough's flanks. On his left a gap opened between his army and Byng's. On his right an even more dangerous if narrower crack developed at the joint where

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he hinged on to the French. The danger grew as Gough's front caved in further and further, eaten away by the German flood that crept onward until, by March 28th, it was not only lapping the edge of Amiens but overlapping this city on the south. The "inundation" of the British front was over fifty miles wide and nearly forty miles deep.

A prime factor in the German success had been their revival of surprise—the master-key to open any barred gate in war. If Ludendorff had conscientiously pursued surprise in the infantry tactics, artillery arrangements, and, above all, by the lavish use of gas- and smoke-shell, he owed it even more to the luck of the weather. For here, as in almost all the successful strokes of 1914–18, nature had lent the matador's cloak beneath which the thrust had been delivered. It was the cloak of mist that enabled the attack to break into and percolate through the defending front. When this had been achieved, the Germans' well-oiled method of pushing in reserves at the points of least resistance prevented their opponents from repairing the breaches in time.

Many of the excuses subsequently advanced by British military spokesmen for the collapse will not bear reasoned examination. We have already noted the fallacious significance ascribed to the extension of the British front. Weight of numbers was another plea. The Germans launched 35 divisions against 21. These were not excessive odds, and were much less than in previous Allied offensives against the German front.

But the odds became heavier on Gough's front because of Haig's dispositions. For a forty-mile front, the southern part newly taken over, Gough was given only 14 divisions. The 11 divisions he put in the line were assailed by 22; and while he had only 3 in reserve, his opponents, Hutier and Marwitz, had a further 21 which they could throw in to reinforce their assault. In contrast, Byng had the same number of divisions as Gough for a front that was little more than half as wide. And he would be attacked at the outset only on part of this front, and by only 10 German divisions (with a further 9 to reinforce them).

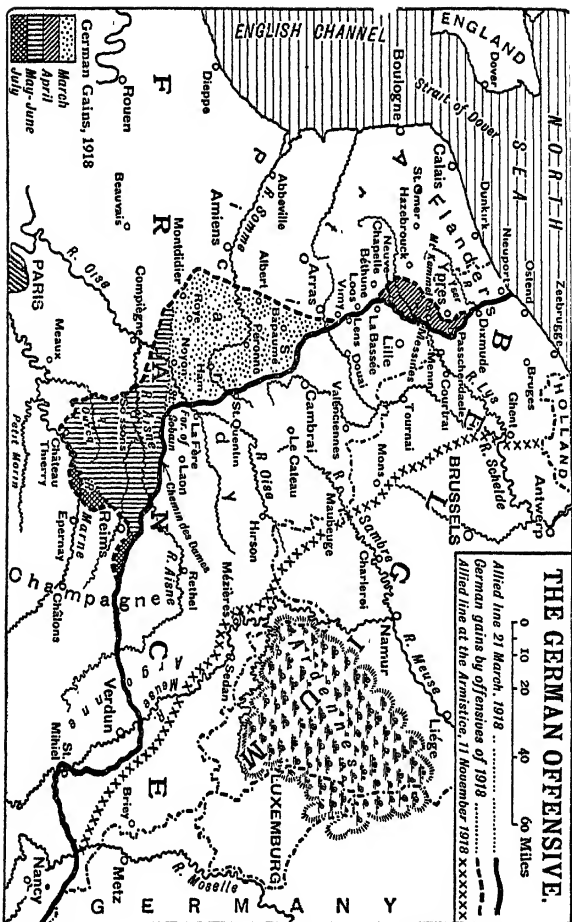
This discrepancy between the odds borne by Gough and Byng was increased because Haig kept his own general reserve of 8 divisions in the north. It is obvious that he took a calculated

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risk with Gough's front in making this doubly uneven distribution of his strength. It would be absurd to blame him for the principle, for calculated risks are inherent in wise generalship. Whether he is blameworthy in his miscalculation is a more open question. His justification for placing the weight of his resources near Arras and northward lies in the key-nature of the Arras position, in the fact that his front in the north covered the Channel ports, and in the contrary fact that there was more room behind Gough's front to fall back if necessary. Furthermore he had the good idea of launching a counterstroke southward if Gough's front was pushed in; and his reserves would have been well placed to do this if the emergency line taken up by Gough along the upper Somme had not given way prematurely.

The main criticism of Haig's dispositions is that they were weakest near the Franco-British joint. Thus he deliberately took the risk of losing touch with his allies in case of a break-through. It is obvious that his calculation did not cover such a complete and deep collapse as occurred. And there was much justification in past experience for the confidence which he, as well as Gough, showed in their power to prevent a serious break-through. Was it probable that, when the Allies had made so little visible impression on the German front in two years of repeated attack, the Germans should smash a huge hole in the British front within a few days? There is much excuse for Haig's miscalculation. But there is little excuse for the subsequent tendency of the British commanders to blame their allies for the collapse. If the French erred throughout the war in treating their ally as their servant, the British erred in making their ally their scapegoat.

In risking his junction with the French, Haig's one insurance was the arrangement he had made with Pétain for mutual support in preference to the chance of drawing on an inter-Allied pool. Under this compact, Pétain had placed Humbert's army of six divisions in reserve south of the joint. On the evening of March 21st Pétain, on his own initiative, ordered three of these (forming the V Corps) to be ready to move. During the night he issued a fresh order for them to begin moving towards Noyon. Haig sent a message thanking him for his prompt



support, but intimated that he did not wish them to intervene yet. He was still confident of stopping the German attack with his own resources.

But in the morning Haig changed his mind, and by evening the first of the French divisions had appeared on the scene, followed closely by the rest of the V Corps. And the other three divisions came up next day, the 23rd. For a strategic reinforcement of such a size, this help was remarkably prompt. In the light of the facts subsequent British complaints that Pétain was slow to fulfil his promise appear as unreasonable as they are ungenerous. It was unfortunate, however, that owing to the rapidity with which these divisions were hurried forward they had a lack of artillery and even of rifle ammunition.

There were other handicaps on the effect of their intervention. The front of the Fifth Army was caving in so fast that part of the French reinforcements had to be used to form a defensive flank along the edge of the chasm, so as to cover the rear of the main French front. And while it was intended that the other divisions should progressively relieve the southern British divisions, the further they had to march, the later they inevitably were. As a result, they were swept up in the retreat before they had time to get firmly into position. The process was not helped by the claim of the French corps commanders to assume control, of British as well as French, before they knew the situation.

But these reflections do not affect the tribute to Pétain for the promptness and fullness of his aid. It was the more creditable because he was inclined to believe that the German attack on the British front would be followed by another in Champagne, and estimated that the Germans had still 55 reserve divisions in hand for such a blow.¹ Despite this, he informed Haig at a meeting on the 23rd that he was reinforcing Humbert's army by a further 6 divisions, as well as 4 of cavalry. They would form the Reserve Army Group ("G.A.R.") under Fayolle, who

¹ On the morning of March 23rd the French Intelligence arrived at the curious calculation that only twenty-six out of eighty-one German reserve divisions had so far been engaged on the British front.

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was to take charge "of all the French and British forces" as far north as the Somme. Next day Pétain arranged to draw a further 6 divisions from other parts of the front. By March 26th, 13 divisions and 3 cavalry divisions were on the scene, while a further 11 divisions and 3 cavalry divisions were under orders or on the way. Thus did Pétain exceed his pledge.

But the effect of it was inevitably modified by the swiftness with which the scene was changing, and the retreat extending—towards the setting sun. Pétain, disconcerted at the unchecked pace of the retreat, began to feel that he was in danger of throwing his reinforcements into a swirling torrent which might sweep them westward to the sea. He saw that the British were tending to draw northward to reknit the gap between their Fifth and Third Armies. And it was obvious, too, from Haig's original dispositions that he was more concerned to cover the Channel ports than the joint with the French. Hence Pétain took a precaution that had a far-reaching repercussion. On the evening of the 24th he issued instructions to his Army Group Commanders, in which he defined his own intentions as "above all, to maintain solidly the framework of the French armies as a whole; in particular not to allow the G.A.R. to be cut off from the rest of our forces. That being assured, to maintain contact with the British forces, if possible." When the next batch of reinforcements (Debeney's army) arrived, it was either to prolong Humbert's left "in order to link it up with the British right, if that continues to hold on," or to give Humbert's army direct support. Still more significantly, the French cavalry were "to cover the left of the G.A.R. (principal mission) while seeking to keep touch with the British right (subsidiary mission)."

At eleven o'clock that night Pétain met Haig at Dury. He was too frank a realist to hide his doubts or his precautions. After a statement of them he warned Haig: "If you withdraw your hand in proportion as I'm stretching out mine towards you, contact between our two armies will be broken in the end; your army then risks being cornered in open country, while I shall be reduced to covering Paris."

Aghast at Pétain's suggestion, and nettled by the implicit rebuke, Haig seems to have taken the words as a statement of

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Pétain's immediate intention. And if there was justification for Pétain's complaint there was also ground for Haig's suspicion. The French reinforcements showed as perceptible a tendency and primary instinct to safeguard the southern side of the chasm as Haig to preserve the northern. Haig was convinced of the importance of maintaining touch with the French, but he seems to have taken for granted that it was the responsibility of the French to take the risk of filling the breach. He had stripped his own front in the north as far as he considered safe. Disturbed to find that Pétain was so conscious of his responsibility for the French Army, Haig sought a means of overruling him. He telegraphed to London, asking Milner and Wilson to come over to France. If Haig had opposed the appointment of a supreme head, inevitably French, when there was a risk of his reserves being taken away, the situation was different when he wanted French reserves. The change in his outlook was natural.

His appeal was anticipated. Milner was already in France and Wilson preparing to follow. More than twenty-four hours before Haig's telegram was sent, Lloyd George had asked Milner to go at once to France and find out the true situation. Milner was met at Boulogne by Amery, then on the Versailles Staff. After a stop at Montreuil, where they missed Haig, they drove on through the night and reached Versailles in the early hours of the 25th, delayed because the driver had missed his way in the dark.

After a talk with Rawlinson, Milner saw Clemenceau, who agreed with him that a unified control was necessary to cope with the emergency. But when Pétain's name was mentioned, Milner made firm objection. He had already heard, from the officers he had met, complaints of Pétain's reluctance to help; and he knew that Wilson favoured Foch.

Foch had already taken the initiative. In the afternoon of the 24th he had asked for an interview with Clemenceau, and had handed him a note in which he gave his opinion of the military steps that ought to be taken and urged the necessity for "an organ to direct the war—one capable of giving orders and seeing that they were executed. Otherwise the risk remained, for the coalition, of entering a battle that might have

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the gravest consequences, inadequately equipped and inadequately directed."

According to Foch, Clemenceau's first words were: "*You* are not going to desert me, you! I am in agreement with Haig and Pétain, what more can I do?" "No, Prime Minister, I am not going to desert you; but each one of us must shoulder his own responsibilities and without delay. That's why I've handed you this note."

According to the account Foch gave Recouly, Clemenceau also remarked: "The Commanders-in-Chief are in agreement. I've lunched with Haig, and I'm going to dine with Pétain." Whereupon Foch seized upon these words to retort: "Battles are not directed over the luncheon table." It was hardly a tactful remark, and in the light of it we can perhaps the better understand why Clemenceau, in his talk with Milner next day, did not specifically advocate the appointment of Foch as the supreme commander.

Before visiting Clemenceau, Foch had expounded his views on the situation to Loucheur, the Minister of Munitions. "It is serious, very serious, but it is in no sense lost. You understand, I don't want to talk of a possible withdrawal. There can be no question of a withdrawal. The time has come when we must make both armies realise this fully. Haig and Pétain have offered a magnificent resistance. The situation can be likened to a double door; each of these generals is behind his half of the door without knowing who should push first to close the door. I quite understand their hesitation; the one who pushes first risks having his right or left wing turned. . . . What should I do in their place? You know my method; I stick a wafer here, another there, a third at the side. . . . The Germans make scarcely any further progress. A fourth wafer, and they will stop altogether." How apt a phrase-maker was Foch!

After his abortive argument with Clemenceau, Foch telephoned to Wilson in London, urging him to come over to France. They agreed that "someone must catch hold, or we shall be beaten." Foch arranged to meet Wilson, as well as Haig, at Abbeville next morning.

But at 11 a.m. on the 25th Foch had a telephone call from

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Clemenceau, who had just received Milner. Clemenceau curtly announced: "There's a council of war at Compiègne," Pétain's headquarters. Foch asked: "What about Abbeville?" "Send Weygand there." At the Gare du Nord, where a train was waiting, Foch met Javary, the director of railway communications, who declared: "Unless you save Amiens, all is lost." "Well, we're going to try." The train arrived at Compiègne about half-past four, as the town was being bombarded, and the conference met in a villa on the outskirts. Clemenceau had brought the President as well as Loucheur, but Milner alone represented the British, for a telephone message came to say that Haig and Wilson could not arrive in time. The meeting, thus denuded, was not barren, because it produced an impression in Milner's mind.

Pétain soberly and clearly described the situation, making no attempt to give his hearers a false assurance. He considered that Gough's army must be wiped off the balance-sheet. He himself had done all he could to close the breach with his reserves, but he did not think he would be able to throw in more than fifteen divisions. Again, it was a question whether they would be in time.

Foch leapt into the breach. He did not, like Pétain, worry the conference with calculations as to whence reserves could be drawn, and the time they would take in transport. But in impassioned words he asserted that "the danger of the great German offensive making a break between the French and British towards Amiens was formidable, that risks must be taken in other directions . . . more divisions must be thrown in, and more quickly."

At a time when spirits were low, such fiery eloquence re-kindled hopes in his hearers. Milner naturally felt that Foch would give more than Pétain. In Haig's absence, no decision could be taken, and it was arranged that the conference should meet again next morning at Dury—a rendezvous later changed to Doullens.

Foch returned to Paris, and had scarcely arrived at his flat in the Avenue de Saxe before Weygand came to see him on return from Abbeville. Haig had given Weygand a note which set

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forth his wishes and intentions. He asked for the immediate concentration "astride the Somme, west of Amiens, of at least twenty French divisions for the purpose of acting against the flank of the German attack on the British Army." This seemed to Foch a clear indication that Haig was going to withdraw behind Amiens. His anxiety was still more aroused by the sentence which epitomised Haig's intention "to fight falling back slowly and covering the Channel ports." It indicated that of two evils Haig would rather lose touch with the French than loose hold of the Channel ports.

Wilson himself came to see Foch about 11 p.m., after a talk with Milner. Earlier in the day Wilson had sounded Haig as to his willingness to accept Foch as co-ordinator, and felt that he had won Haig over to this solution. But during his discussion with Milner he conjured up a variant—that Clemenceau should be entrusted with the supreme control of the situation, with Foch acting as his technical adviser. It was arranged that he should sound Foch on the subject. On hearing the suggestion, Foch at once interrupted: "That won't work. Clemenceau knows nothing of leading armies or directing battles. Who, then, will take charge of affairs? There will be decisions to take—who will take them? Clemenceau will say: 'I agree with Haig and Pétain.' But it is not a matter of agreeing with them. He must command. Who will assume the responsibility? . . . No, it won't work."

He then made his own proposal for Wilson to convey to Milner. "At the time of the Battle of Ypres, General Joffre gave me the task of trying to bring about a better union between the English and French troops. If to-day I were placed in a similar position I should need a greater degree of authority, conferred on me by the Allied Governments themselves." It was then arranged between the two that Wilson "would suggest that Foch should be commissioned by both Governments to co-ordinate the military action of the two Commanders-in-Chief."

Wilson did not arrive back at Versailles until after midnight, when Milner had gone to bed. Thus there was no chance of a talk until at 8 a.m. the two set off together by car on the

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long journey to Doullens. Wilson strongly urged on Milner the wisdom of giving to Foch what would be virtually the supreme command. Milner asked what Foch thought of the idea of giving nominal control to Clemenceau with Foch as his adviser. Wilson replied that Foch disapproved of this idea. Wilson assured Milner that "Foch himself did not want to command anything," but merely wished to fill his old rôle of "First Ypres" with increased authority. This solution, urged with all Wilson's power of persuasion, appealed to Milner, and he decided to take the responsibility of committing the British Government to it. For the rest of the journey he was harassed by the one thought whether they would reach the conference in time, for although the car was travelling at breakneck speed they met many traffic blocks on their way through the edge of the battle zone.

The French representatives had set out still earlier. Loucheur, Clemenceau, and Poincaré arrived about 11 a.m., close on each other's heels, their cars racing up the street past the ancient belfry and then swinging left to draw up before the town hall. They found that Haig was inside, conferring with his army commanders, so, to pass the time of waiting and to keep warm in the frosty air, they walked up and down the square outside, while past them stolidly trudged columns of British troops. Their spirits were as chilled as their limbs. Pointing to Haig, a French general whispered to Clemenceau: "There's a man who will be obliged to capitulate in the open field within a fortnight, and we'll be very lucky if we're not obliged to do the same."

Foch arrived half an hour later. His feelings on the journey were summed up in his remark: "We are about to try to create events, not to submit to them." Like Napoleon at Notre Dame, he was about to crown himself. As he stepped out of his car "he gave the impression of a man who was ready to throw himself bodily into the battle and to assume the heavy responsibility of the strategic direction, and that because he felt within him the soul of a great leader."

Pétain was the next arrival, sombre of mien. He complained that the British were not keeping him properly informed of the situation, and that they did not seem to take full account of the

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danger of being cut off from the French. In his depressingly honest way he showed the black side of the situation first, so that the members of the Government should not be nourished on false illusions. And their spirits naturally felt a pang of hunger.

Clemenceau turned to Foch and asked him what steps he would suggest. "Oh," cried Foch, "my plan is not complicated. I want to fight. I would fight without a break. I would fight in front of Amiens. I would fight in Amiens. I would fight behind Amiens. I would fight all the time, and, by force of hitting, I would finish by shaking up the Boche; he's neither cleverer nor stronger than we are. In any case, for the moment, it is as in 1914 on the Marne; we must dig in and die where we stand if need be; to withdraw a foot will be an act of treason."

Clemenceau's face lit up at these stirring sentiments, and turning to Loucheur he murmured: "That's a stout fellow." He recalled the epic story of the marshes of St. Gond—he did not know, nor ever learnt, that it was a myth.

Twelve o'clock struck. Five minutes later Milner's car swept into the square and pulled up. As he and Wilson stepped out Clemenceau came forward and, almost in the first breath, asked "if it was a fact that Marshal Haig had the intention of evacuating, and of bringing back his right wing west of, Amiens?" Milner showed his surprise and protested vigorously against such an assertion, declaring that so far as he knew it must be due to a misunderstanding. Haig now appeared and came down the steps to meet Milner. Onlookers noticed the contrast between the expressions of Haig and Wilson, Haig's face anxious and tired, on Wilson's a gleeful smile—the clue to which lay in the air of decision which Milner wore. Milner asked Clemenceau to allow him to have a preliminary talk with Haig and his three army commanders, Plumer, Byng, and Horne. Gough, significantly, was not there. After hearing their news on the battle situation, Milner had a few words alone with Haig. He was relieved to find that, contrary to his anticipation, Haig welcomed the idea of Foch's intervention and appointment. The ice, as we know, had been broken and the ground prepared by Wilson the day before.

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This preliminary discussion lasted barely a quarter of an hour, and the Franco-British conference then assembled. During the time of waiting Foch had seized the chance to revisit the little schoolhouse where he had established his headquarters in early October, 1914.

Clemenceau opened the proceedings by asking about Amiens. Haig replied that he had been misunderstood, that he had never intended to evacuate Amiens, and that he was reinforcing his right with all the divisions available. He could and would hold on north of the Somme, but south of the Somme he could do no more; besides, he had put under General Pétain's orders all the troops of the Fifth Army that remained. At this, Pétain interjected: "Very little of it remains, and in strict truth we may say that this army no longer exists." Haig then went on to say that he might be forced to modify his line in front of Arras, although he hoped to avoid this last resource. After this statement of his own dispositions, he asked what the French were doing.

Pétain then gave his view of the situation, shading in the dark outlines first, and then suddenly unveiling a brighter prospect by the announcement that he now calculated that he would be able to throw in 24 divisions, instead of the 15 he had reckoned the day before. But he promptly damped any joy among his hearers by saying that "in such a situation one ought not to hug delusions, but to face realities and, consequently, not hide that these units would take some time to arrive on the scene, moving at the rate of two a day."

A chilly silence fell on the room, broken only by a sharp exclamation of protest from Wilson. Foch said nothing, but Milner, sitting opposite him, read discontent and impatience on his face. And to Milner, Pétain "gave an impression of coldness and circumspection, like a man playing for safety." Clemenceau made a sign to Milner, they exchanged glances, and then withdrew into a corner of the room, as far as possible from the big table round which the delegates were seated. Clemenceau, with typical cunning, spoke first so as to manoeuvre Milner into making the first bid. "We must settle this. . . . What do you propose?" Milner, however, needed no prompting. He straightway asked if Clemenceau would agree to give Foch

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authority to co-ordinate the action of the two armies. Clemenceau said that he would first consult Pétain, who declared that he was ready to accept whatever was decided in the common interest. Milner meantime spoke to Haig again.

Then Clemenceau drafted the following note:

“ General Foch is appointed by the British and French Governments to co-ordinate the action of the British and French Armies around Amiens. To this end, he will come to an understanding with the two Generals-in-Chief, who are requested to furnish him with all necessary information.”

On seeing the draft, Haig at once objected that its terms were too narrow, and declared that Foch ought to be placed in control of the Allied armies as a whole “ from the Alps to the North Sea.” It is absurd to see in Haig’s advocacy of an extension of Foch’s authority a supreme stroke of magnanimity, as it has often been represented. Haig was a practical Scot, not given to such gestures. In accepting a superior authority, his ruling idea was to obtain an ample flow of French reserves to cope with both the immediate danger and with the further German attack that he anticipated in Flanders. Under the prevailing circumstances he had nothing to give and all to gain. The further that Foch’s authority was extended the larger, naturally, would be the sources from which the reserves could be drawn. Hence Haig proposed that the words “ on the whole front ” should be substituted for “ around Amiens.” Foch had also taken prompt exception to the narrowness of the original draft, and asked that the words “ on the Western Front ” should be used. And this term, more exact than Haig’s, was adopted, while at Haig’s suggestion the words “ British and French Armies ” were replaced by “ Allied Armies.” Presumably Haig was thinking of the American and Belgian reserves.

The final draft of the note was then read out, and signed by Milner and Clemenceau. As by magic the atmosphere changed. All faces were wreathed in smiles. The British, in anticipation, felt the infusion of new blood coursing through their veins. More French reserves. The French saw the realisation of a dream—their long-cherished project of a French Supreme Com-

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mand. As they left the town hall Clemenceau delightedly declared to the head of his military secretariat, General Mordacq: "That's almost worth a victory over the Germans." And Mordacq, in retrospect, made the comment: "It certainly was, in effect, a victory—but over the English."

Haig's relief and satisfaction were equally visible to onlookers. His feelings were expressed in his remark to Milner: "I can deal with a man, but not with a committee." Foch was "radiant." His hour had come. The practical-minded Pétain wanted to discuss certain points with him. The two leant over a map, conversing in a low tone. Suddenly Foch's voice rang out: "No question of that . . . it's not possible. . . . We shall stop them . . . Give the order. . . . We shan't retire any further." Pétain then hastened back to his battle. The British generals had already left, Haig and Foch shaking hands warmly in parting. It had turned two o'clock. Foch walked across with Weygand and the French Ministers to the *Hotel des Quatre Fils Aymon* for a late lunch. Outside British tanks stood massively on guard against any unpleasant intrusion. As they sat down Clemenceau turned to Foch and in half-complimentary, half-sarcastic accents said: "Well, you've got it at last, your high command."

Foch retorted: "It's a fine present you've made me; you give me a lost battle and tell me to win it."

"Anyhow, you've got what you wanted."

Loucheur intervened: "You shouldn't say that, Prime Minister. General Foch is accepting it out of devotion to his country, but it's no pleasure to him."

The historian may not deem these two feelings so incompatible as Loucheur implied. If Foch was inspired by love of his country, a study of his character amply indicates that such a charge was his highest pleasure.

Lunch over, Clemenceau and the President left for Paris. Milner and Wilson, who had also gone to the hotel for lunch, had already left for Montreuil, where they had tea with Haig and found him "delighted with the new arrangement," and "ten years younger to-night than he was yesterday afternoon." Wilson was even more delighted. Clemenceau had patted him on the head and called him "un bon garçon"

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Foch left Doullens after lunch and drove straight to Dury, where Gough had his headquarters. His hour also had struck. Immediately after the signing of the agreement at Doullens, Wilson had raised the question of removing Gough from his command, and had offered to let Haig have Rawlinson as his successor. Haig had apparently agreed. This fact doubtless convinced Foch that Gough was culpable for the collapse, and may explain, if not excuse, the rudeness of his greeting—a greeting like the violent gust that precedes the lightning.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was waiting for you."

"You should not wait for me in that way without doing anything, or else your corps commanders will be on your heels and everyone will stampede. Go forward; the whole line will stand fast and so will your own men. I'm straightening things out. I'm going to give a few orders."

It does not seem, in retrospect, an altogether happy initial exercise of his new authority, and the implied suggestion of personal cowardice was peculiarly inappropriate when applied to a man who, whatever his limitations as an army commander, was a born thruster and first-rate cavalry commander.

When Gough asked that part of his tired troops might be relieved, Foch refused, with the remark: "One does not carry out reliefs in the middle of a battle." At Dury, Foch also saw Fayolle's Chief of Staff and gave him similar instructions, "with a view to ensuring the protection of Amiens at all costs." Foch then drove to see Debeney, commander of the now-arriving French First Army, and told him to relieve Maxse's XVIII Corps, now the right of the British line. This relief was carried out two nights later.

Foch returned to Paris in the evening, remarking: "I've seen what there is to see, done what there is to do. I can stop them." Yet there seems to have been more doubt in his mind than he was willing to show to his subordinates, for when he reached home late that night and broke the news of his appointment to this wife, he added: "Don't congratulate me yet. I'm no prouder because of that. And pray God that it isn't too late."

Before he went to sleep he wrote a note to Pétain, saying:

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"The ideas that I am trying to carry out are: (1) There is not another yard of French soil to lose; (2) the enemy must be stopped where he is; to that end we must organise rapidly a solid defensive front and prepare in rear strong resources for manoeuvre, drawing them from the whole front; (3) it will only then be possible to think of relieving the troops now engaged; (4) these must organise themselves to hold at all costs and fight it out where they stand."

Before this letter was written, Pétain had already taken a further practical step. On returning to his headquarters in the afternoon he had learnt from intelligence reports that 4 enemy divisions hitherto in reserve behind the Champagne front were being moved westward. Therefore he had arranged for a further 9 divisions to be drawn from his centre and right and sent to reinforce Fayolle's army group. These, as well as a few more whose dispatch was ordered next day, all arrived by April 2nd. Thus a total of 34 divisions and 6 cavalry divisions were assembled on or behind the fifty-odd miles of new front north of the Oise, along which the French had stretched out to keep touch with their allies. This total left only some 60 divisions to hold the original front from the Oise to Alsace—three hundred miles long. In taking the risk, Pétain relied on the defensive strength of his trench line and on the evidence that the mass of the German reserves were concentrated on the British front. Even so it was a bold risk to assume, and the more so in comparison with what any British commander had been willing to assume. For such boldness Foch and Pétain deserve all credit: Foch for taking the responsibility, Pétain for the calculated temerity which he showed both before Foch assumed responsibility and then in loyal compliance with Foch's desire.

On the 27th Foch went out to the battle zone again. He first visited Humbert's headquarters at Clermont, where he also saw Fayolle. He then went to Dury, where he once more treated Gough to brusque admonitions, complaining that Gough's right was not keeping touch with the French left. Foch passed on to Beauquesne, where he was pleased with Byng's attitude and disclaimer that he felt any anxiety. In the evening Foch returned south, calling at Dury to satisfy himself that Gough had

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fulfilled his wishes. If Foch was prepared for ill news there, it was not for the kind which greeted him. For he learnt that the Germans had pushed back the French troops and reached Montdidier, cutting one of the two railways from Amiens to Paris. After this shock Foch did not linger at Dury, but hurried on to Clermont, where he spent the night.

If Foch had been able to project his mind into the inner chambers of the German headquarters his anxiety would have been no less, but differently orientated. For the centre of gravity was on the other flank, the spot where he had left Byng, not the spot whither he had come. Although Hutier's army had reached Montdidier, its advance had momentarily come to a halt—ironically through German intervention. Hutier, indeed, had been kept on a tight rein since the start of the offensive.

For Ludendorff's real plan had been not so much to strike at the Franco-British joint south of the Somme as to crush the British north of it. Hutier's assigned rôle had merely been to guard the flank of the German offensive against French intervention while the armies of Below and Marwitz wheeled north-west towards the Channel ports, rolling up the British front. Thus the fact that the German advance had been more rapid on the south than on the north of the Somme had been a disappointment to Ludendorff. For days he had obstinately tried to redress the disproportion, bolstering up Below's attack and maintaining Arras as the principal objective, while restraining Hutier's advance. Although Ludendorff paid lip service to the new idea of following the line of least resistance, his orders show that he could not free himself from the dead hand of Clausewitz. He was bent on breaking the British Army by breaking down its strongest sector of resistance in a virtually direct assault. And because of this obsession he neglected, until too late, to throw the weight of his reserves south of the Somme, where progress was easier and the Allies more vulnerable.

On the very day of Foch's appointment Ludendorff had ordered for the 28th a reinforced blow by Below's right against Arras. At the same time he conceded that Amiens should now be an additional main objective—for Marwitz, who was now entangled in the scarred wilderness of the old Somme battle-

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fields. Hutier, who had an easier path, was told not to push on past the flank of Amiens without further orders. Thus the spurt that had carried him to Montdidier was virtually in disregard of Ludendorff's instructions. But his wish to press on was effectually curbed by lack of reserves.

On March 28th the Arras attack was duly launched, and, unshielded by mist or surprise, failed completely in face of Byng's well-prepared resistance. Then, at last, Ludendorff abandoned his original plan and transferred his main effort south of the Somme. But Marwitz was given nine divisions and Hutier only four. And while Marwitz received the reserves immediately at hand, Hutier had to wait, and was told to wait, for two more days before renewing his attack.

The 28th, a day of such decisive passivity by Byng's army, was also for Foch a stationary day, although vocally active. In the morning he received Pétain and Fayolle, and renewed to them his adjurations to stand fast and maintain contact with the British. In addition, on being told that Gough thought of moving his headquarters to a place further back than Dury, Foch sent him a sharp remonstrance, declaring that such a step would produce a deplorable impression.

In the afternoon Clemenceau, accompanied by Mordacq, came to Clermont and found Foch "at the top of his form and in full cerebral activity; in his look, in his talk, could be read his joy of at last being quit of uncertainty and, above all, impatient eagerness to act."

Their talk was barely ended when Pershing was announced. According to Mordacq he greeted Foch with the words: "France is in danger; the situation is grave; I've come to put myself and all my troops at your disposal."

It was an inspiring gesture on Pershing's part—although in actual fact he did no more than he had already arranged with Pétain. This was to relieve two French divisions by taking over quiet sectors. There were now (according to Pershing's final report) 300,000 American troops in France, forming eight divisions, of which three would now be in line. A month later another would relieve two French divisions near Montdidier.

This dramatic scene was thus translated officially in the com-

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muniqué: "In the course of a meeting, held yesterday at the front, General Pershing announced to General Foch: 'I come to tell you that the American people will esteem it a great honour that our troops should take part in the present battle. I ask it in my name and theirs. There is at the moment no other question than that of fighting. Infantry, artillery, aviation, all that we have is yours. Dispose of it as you wish. Other forces will soon come, as numerous as is necessary. The American people will be proud to take part in the greatest and finest battle in history.' "

It hardly needs Mordacq's hint to suggest that this account was embellished. For even if such magniloquence could be imagined on Pershing's lips, there is the fact that he was still dependent on the French for artillery six months later. More natural in sound, more probable in sentiment, was the remark which Bliss made to Foch a few days later: "We've come over here to get ourselves killed; if you want to use us, what are you waiting for?"

The day of the 28th did not end, however, without a concrete step. For, after hearing a gloomy report from Debeney, Foch notified Haig that "by reason of the attack on Montdidier the French cannot relieve the English south of the Somme"—as had been promised.

Next day Foch went to Abbeville for a fresh meeting with Haig, where he emphasised his desire to create two strong groups of reserves, British and French, on either flank of the enemy's bulge for a counter-offensive. The tone of the discussion was cordial, although Haig showed some dissatisfaction that Foch's appointment had not more appreciably quickened the rate at which the British troops were being relieved south of the Somme. That evening Foch established his headquarters in the town hall at Beauvais. Only two rooms were required—for this new organ of strategic control was as small in size as it was personal in nature.

In this condition there were practical drawbacks. Foch was, by his appointment, superimposed on the two Commanders-in-Chief, and by his own inclination immersed in the battle. And, while dealing direct with the French and British subordinate commanders, he lacked a headquarter organisation which might

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have co-ordinated his own activities with those of the other commanders—of whom there was already a plethora. In the narrow space between the Oise and the Somme there were three British and eleven French corps commanders, whose troops were considerably intermixed. One step higher came the three army commanders, one British and two French. Above them, in turn, stood a French Army group commander, and above him the two national Commanders-in-Chief. Foch was set like a crown upon the giddy pinnacle. A cynic might suggest that if the Allied resistance had been endangered originally by a lack of troops, its complaint now was an excess of commanders. For effective intervention in this congestion Foch was handicapped both by want of a staff organ and by the indefiniteness of his rôle, if also by his temperament. It was not easy for him to be more, or less, than an officially appointed Busybody-in-Chief.

He himself was not long in becoming aware of the external limitations. He felt that the weakness could be remedied by strengthening the terms of his appointment. On the 30th Clemenceau came to see him, accompanied by Winston Churchill. Foch gave a review of the situation, which, he said, was improving. "In this exposition, Foch was superb in faith and ardour." He swept off his feet even the cynical Tiger. "At seeing, in front of our Allies, at this agonising moment, such an accumulator of energy and confidence, Monsieur Clemenceau was so overcome with pride that he threw himself into the arms of the general and clung to him in a long embrace."

Mordacq took the opportunity to urge on Churchill the need of increasing Foch's powers. Foch himself improved the opportunity by convincing Clemenceau. He took the matter up again next day and quoted several instances of the difficulties he had met in dealing with the British generals. Haig did not seem to regard "co-ordination" as a synonym for command-in-chief, and had proved tiresome when Foch wanted to regulate the way the British should be employed. On parting from Foch, Clemenceau said to Mordacq: "Foch is justified . . . we must settle this." The date was April 1st.

Clemenceau not only went to have a personal talk with Haig, but made instant arrangements for an inter-Allied conference at

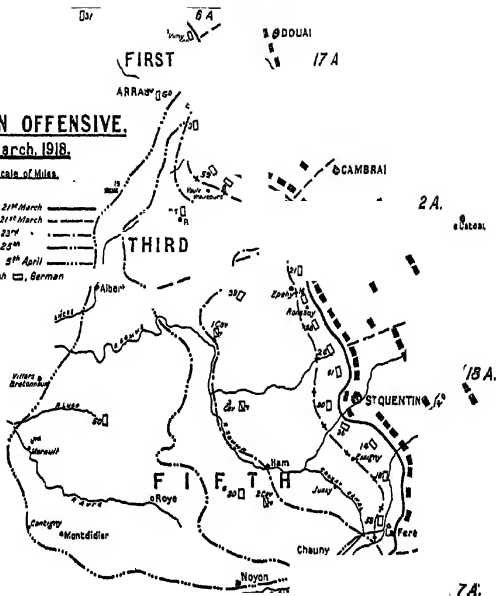
GERMAN OFFENSIVE.

March, 1918.

Scale of Miles.

Original Line on 21st March
 Line on evening 21st March
 " " 23rd
 " " 25th
 " " 3rd April

Divisions - British , German 



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short notice. For this he besought the presence of the Americans as well as of Lloyd George.

While these important discussions were taking place behind the front, the battle had again flared up—only to fade almost as quickly. For when Marwitz's attack was renewed on March 30th, according to Ludendorff's new plan, it had little momentum and made little progress in face of a resistance that had been allowed time to harden. If the thin, ragged line of British troops who covered the direct path to Amiens was weary and faint from the long strain of the retreat, even fainter was the impulse to advance in the attackers, groping in unknown country and buffeted by constant air attacks, which not only shook their morale but emptied their stomach—by interrupting their supplies. Further south there seems to have been more energy in Hutier's renewed attack, which on March 31st forced the crossings of the Avre and made an ominous fresh step towards the main Amiens-Paris railway, bringing it under artillery fire. But on this sector the French were now thickly massed, if perhaps too thickly for effective action, and the German advance was brought to a halt before evening.

It was thus in an atmosphere of comparative calm that the inter-Allied conference met at Beauvais on April 3rd. Churchill went to meet Lloyd George and Wilson at Boulogne and told them that Clemenceau's purpose was to strengthen Foch's powers. Lloyd George was favourable. Wilson, however, warned him against going so far as to make Foch Commander-in-Chief. Clemenceau, meantime, was pondering a subterfuge by which he might gain this object. On the 2nd he had received a letter from Foch which ended: "I am not complaining of anybody, but I am compelled to use persuasion instead of giving directions. A power of supreme direction seems to me indispensable for the achievement of success." Mordacq had already told Clemenceau that "the King of England" was the real stumbling-block, and suggested that the difficulty might be overcome by finding a form of words which gave Foch the power of Commander-in-Chief without the title, which "gives offence to the English." "Well," replied Clemenceau, "look for it, find it, this formula."

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When he reached Beauvais on the 3rd he spent the two hours before lunch in discussing with Foch suggestions for the formula. Mordacq proposed the term "strategic direction," and to this Foch was agreeable. After lunch Clemenceau had a private talk with Lloyd George and Wilson before the conference. When the conference opened Clemenceau called on Foch to explain his difficulties. Thereupon Foch declared: "The powers conferred by the Doullens conference were limited to the co-ordination of action between the Allies. . . . Now that the opposing armies are no longer in action, but have stopped and are facing each other, there is nothing to co-ordinate. There should be authority to prepare for action and to direct it. We are back where we were, and nothing can be done until a new action begins."

Lloyd George pointed out the strength of the opposition in England to placing the British Army under the definite command of a French general. But he also said that the public wished Foch to have real power. Addressing Foch, he declared: "The English people have confidence in you. Your nomination . . . has nowhere been so well received as in my country."

Clemenceau then produced his formula: "The British and French Governments entrust to General Foch the strategic direction of military operations on the Western Front. The Commanders-in-Chief of the British and French Armies have full exercise of the tactical direction of their armies."

Clemenceau's step in securing the presence of Pershing and Bliss was now justified, for they declared their willingness that this formula should embrace the American Army. Pershing, indeed, was delighted at the chance to affirm that it "should be included as an entity like the British and French Armies." And when Pétain realistically interposed, "There is no American Army yet as such," Pershing premonishingly retorted, "But there soon will be." His step towards independence meant the loss of British independence, for his ready acceptance of the proposals undermined British opposition—as Clemenceau had calculated.

Wilson interposed with the objection "that one never knows

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where strategy exactly begins and ends." To this Foch replied "that in France one knows it perfectly." If the assumption was as dubious as the possibility of exact demarcation, especially under trench warfare conditions, it sufficed as a retort. But Wilson preferred a more effective form of reply. He argued that any new draft should be based on the Doullens agreement and incorporated Clemenceau's formula in the middle of the Doullens note in such a way as to modify it.

The completed draft read:

"General Foch is appointed by the British, French, and American Governments to co-ordinate the action of the British, French, and American Armies on the Western Front. To this end, all powers necessary to secure effective fulfilment are conferred upon him. The British, French, and American Governments for this purpose entrust to General Foch the strategic direction of military operations. The Commanders-in-Chief of the British, French, and American Armies have full exercise of the tactical direction of their armies. Each Commander-in-Chief will have the right of appeal to his own Government if, in his opinion, his army is placed in danger by any order received from General Foch."

Wilson inserted the last sentence, an important qualification on Foch's power, however advisable as a national safeguard. This was not the only shadow on Foch's satisfaction. He had specially emphasised the desirability that his sphere of control should include the Italian front also; but Clemenceau thought it wiser to proceed by stages. Nevertheless, he put the proposal to the British Government a few days later, so as to secure their help in overcoming Italian objections; but Wilson warned the Cabinet against it, telling them that Foch had not ingratiated himself with the Italians after Caporetto. Thus Foch's desire was once more thwarted by his old friend "Henri." Not until May 2nd did the Italian Government concede Foch a modified power of co-ordination, with the proviso that this would bear no right of command unless other Allied armies were sent to Italy. And the Belgians held out against accepting his directions until the final autumn offensive took place.

Wilson's revised draft was accepted by all the parties at the

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Beauvais conference, and the meeting broke up amicably. As they left the room Lloyd George gaily said to Foch: "And now which must I bet on, Ludendorff or Foch?"

"You can back me, and you will win. For Ludendorff has got to break through our lines and this he can no longer do. As for us, our present business is to stop him, which we will certainly accomplish. Later on—when our turn comes to break through his lines—that is another matter. Then it will be seen what we can do."

If the bet was ultimately to be justified, the assurance of Ludendorff's incapacity was misplaced. The very day after the conference there was an ominous foretaste.

On April 1st Foch had told Clemenceau: "The enemy's initiative seems now blocked and paralysed." On April 4th a new German assault with fifteen divisions was hurled against the Allied line between the Somme and Montdidier. But only four divisions were fresh, and although the attack made a fresh dent in the Allied line it did not threaten a break-through. The worst effect was that on the French sector it brought the German artillery within closer range of the Amiens-Paris railway.

Here the battle ended and the first German offensive was finally brought to a halt. In achieving that result Foch played a characteristic part. To many who met him his unconquerable spirit was a tonic—if to a few it was an emetic. Behind the front especially his injections brought fresh confidence to commanders who might otherwise have countenanced withdrawal, harmless and even beneficial in themselves, but cumulatively dangerous. Still more marked was the effect on political and public opinion.

In the actual conduct of the battle it is more difficult to put one's finger on any points where Foch had a definite effect, either in accelerating the arrival of reinforcements or in parrying the enemy thrusts. It was Ludendorff who really placed the decisive check on the German progress, and foiled his own aim.

Foch's instructions were drawn up in the bold, broad outline now familiar, comprehensive yet unsubstantial. They were exhortations rather than specific directions. And the executants found difficulty in pinning him down to any point of guidance. This indefiniteness had its advantages. As at Ypres in 1914, it

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perhaps led commanders to hold on a little longer when otherwise they might have gone back. But they might reply, with some reason, that Foch had to thank Ludendorff for making this vindication of vagueness possible. It is at least clear that without Ludendorff's deliberate check on Hutier's advance the Allied front must have been driven in further—at the dangerous point of juncture. And in that event a local break would have been likely to spread into general disaster, for want of guidance as to what course should then be taken.

But Foch, as always, was guided by faith. "Le bon Dieu" would absolve him from the need to answer awkward questions. The answer that he gave to a "doubting Thomas" during the crisis summed up not only his view but his direction of the battle: "Materially, I do not see that victory is possible. Morally, I am certain that we shall gain it." Yet the battle to him was as much a physical experience as for any medieval monk beset by the devil. There is an underlying significance in the impression recorded by one who saw him in his two-roomed headquarters at Beauvais: "The most insignificant German colonel would have made ten times as much show. Foch is still the same, in his grey-blue uniform, with his cavalryman's walk, his short legs, his large head wrinkled and bronzed by the war, the searching glance, sometimes malicious beneath the puckered eyelids, the heavy moustache greyish and tobacco-stained, and the mouth which can take so many diverse expressions in a few minutes, from the most brutal vigour to an ironical good humour. His gestures are still prodigiously prompt, prodigiously expressive. He showed me the map where, in diverse colours, was written the story of a battle nearing its end. He explained its phases. And then: 'There! That's past. What had we got to do? To stop them at all costs.' He threw out his arms and drew them back gradually; the pocket seemed to grow beneath my eyes. 'And then to stand firm. That's now!' His two hands plunged towards the ground in a gesture that would have arrested the universe. 'And finally—this'll come later—that!' His arms thrown open anew, he brought his fists forward to crash round the venturesome foe."

If the modern conditions of command held Foch far back

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behind the fighting-line, his spirit was projected into the fighting-line through a bodily medium. He fought the enemy in person, and fought them with his fists, even though he did but hit the air. Yet it would seem that he was unconscious of his own action and attributes. For when shown an old photograph in which he had been caught in a characteristic attitude, he replied, with a wave of the arm that almost knocked over the man beside him: "It's not me! I never make gestures!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRIALS OF FAITH

LUDENDORFF's failure to secure a decisive result from his first and greatest offensive was the more significant by comparison with his cost account. Although eighty thousand British soldiers were newly caged in German prison camps, their capture had proved expensive. For the first time since 1914 the Germans had suffered heavier loss than their opponents. All the skill shown in the methods of the offensive had not succeeded in making the offensive profitable.

But neither Ludendorff nor his chief opponent indulged in such reflections.

On April 3rd, immediately after the Beauvais agreement, Foch issued his first *directive*. It opened with the statement:

"The enemy is now held up from Arras to the Oise. On this front he can resume the offensive (a) with ease north of the Somme, and particularly in the region of Arras, thanks to the numerous railways at his disposal; (b) with greater difficulty on the south, where the railways he has captured are less numerous, are in bad order, and lie partly within range of our guns."

As a forecast this appreciation proved incorrect. For the Germans never again attempted to take the offensive north of the Somme; but the very next day they made another big attack south of the Somme. Like Foch's pre-war forecast of the

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original German plan, his appreciation illustrated his tendency to base his judgment on strategic factors and overlook the question whether a course was practicable from a tactical point of view. The Germans, in contrast, had learnt by hard experience the strength of the Arras position.

Foch then passed on to his intentions—"to maintain ourselves defensively, for the moment, on the front Albert-Arras." A French reserve would be kept north of Beauvais which would be able to counter any "very powerful enemy offensive north of the Somme." But Foch, true to his nature, was contemplating a counter-offensive. No sooner was the enemy offensive dying down than Foch's first thought was to take the offensive himself. Hence he ordered:

"(1) As soon as possible a double French offensive in the Montdidier region with the object of clearing the St. Just-Amiens railway, while also profiting by the right-angled shape of our front to drive the enemy eastwards from the Avre, and also to push northward towards Roye; (2) a British offensive eastward astride the Somme, between the Luce and the Ancre, with the object of disengaging Amiens." "It would be of the greatest advantage if these two offensives, whose directions fortunately harmonise, could be carried out simultaneously. The Commanders-in-Chief are therefore requested to be good enough to notify the date on which they judge it possible to undertake these operations; it is important that they start with the least possible delay."

A week later this offensive "castle in the air" collapsed with dramatic suddenness. Ludendorff had still several thunderbolts in reserve, and he forestalled Foch by launching the next in an entirely new sector. On April 9th the Germans broke through the front in Flanders. Next day Haig informed Foch that he must no longer count on Rawlinson's army for the attack on the Somme.

Pétain also, with less apparent justification, seized the opportunity to excuse himself from obeying Foch's instructions. The reason he gave was that, without Rawlinson's army, Fayolle would not have sufficient forces to ensure success. As the French had now assembled over forty divisions north of the Oise the excuse was palpably insufficient. And it is curious that

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Foch accepted it. Pétain's real reason would seem that he endorsed the opinion of Fayolle that "since March 21st the war has taken a new form . . . for which our soldiers are not yet sufficiently trained." Fayolle, indeed, told Clemenceau "it will be wise to train our soldiers in these new methods of fighting and also to wait until we are reinforced by the Americans." The last sentence especially gave the key to Pétain's mind. By passive resistance he would evade Foch's pressure for offensives until, with the turn of the summer, the tide of the war was turned by the arrival of America's first million men. One cannot but admire the calm pertinacity with which Pétain abstained from premature action until his calculation was fulfilled and his 1917-bottled plan matured.

In the few days between the Beauvais conference and the new thunderbolt in Flanders Foch had not been inactive. On April 5th he received the French war correspondents, saying: "Well, gentlemen, our affairs are not going badly. The Boche, as we must call him by this name, has been held up since March 27th. Look at the map—the wave is dying on the beach. We have stopped him. Now we must try to go one better. I don't think I have any more to say to you; go on with your task—work with your pens and we'll work with our arms."

On the 6th Foch had a letter from Haig which declared that a German offensive was imminent between Arras and Bethune. This anticipation, correct as to the enemy's intention, misjudged the area of the attack. For the suggested sector did not even overlap the actual sector; Bethune, the northern limit suggested, would prove the southern limit of the actual attack. As a reply to the menace Haig asked that the French, "without delay," should relieve the four British divisions south of the Somme, or place four of their own divisions in reserve behind Arras.

On the 7th Foch met Haig at Abbeville and learnt that Haig now expected that the enemy offensive would extend as far south as Albert. This coincided with Foch's own anticipation, and, in partial fulfilment of Haig's desire, he ordered Pétain to place four divisions west of Amiens, "ready to intervene rapidly either in the region of Arras or in the region of Amiens."

That afternoon Foch moved his own headquarters from over-

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crowded Beauvais, too inviting a target for enemy aircraft, to the tiny village of Sarcus, on the northward road to the seaside resort of Le Tréport. At Sarcus he installed his offices in a small house, taking one of the ground-floor rooms for himself and the other for Weygand, while he took as his abode a lilliputian modern "castle" that had been built on the site of an old-time château. Here he stayed in restful quietude and solitude until the early days of June.

On April 9th he drove north to call on Haig at Montreuil, arriving just after midday. He found Wilson already closeted with Haig, who had received news that the Germans were attacking north of Bethune. Although the full extent of the danger was as yet not realised, Haig pressed for support, preferably by the French taking over a six-division front at Ypres. According to Wilson, "Foch would not hear of relieving us either up at Ypres or opposite Amiens. He simply would not hear of it." Foch assured Haig again that Maistre's Tenth Army of four divisions and a cavalry corps was being moved up behind Amiens, but told Haig that he must depend on his own resources for the moment. Foch was still convinced that the attack was a preliminary to an attack between Arras and the Somme.

He then took up with Wilson a different question which had been much on his mind during the preceding days. "Foch wants a title for himself." On the 6th Foch had told Clemenceau that the Beauvais agreement "was insufficient." He was "in effect very embarrassed about putting a title at the head of his official letters." He felt also that the "title of Commander-in-Chief, which he lacked," was necessary to convince the British that his requests were commands. Clemenceau had promised to take up the question with the Allied Governments, but Foch was impatient, and gave Clemenceau a vigorous reminder two days later. He also, as we have seen, seized the chance to impress Wilson with the need of such a title. Clemenceau kept his word. On the morning of April 14th—when the British in Flanders were on the verge of disaster—Mordacq found Clemenceau "beaming." "He had just received a telegram from Monsieur Lloyd George telling him that the British Government saw no objection to General Foch assuming the title of Com-

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mander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France." Mordacq was about "to dash off" and announce the glad tidings to Foch, when Clemenceau stopped him and said that "in order to spare American susceptibilities" he must first obtain the approval of Bliss. This was at once accorded, however, and in the evening the announcement of Foch's new title was broadcast from the Eiffel Tower. Mordacq declared "the German guns had been stronger than British pride, and had compelled it to give way." Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the British were too occupied with the German menace to worry about trifles.

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Once again in a thick mist the German attack had been launched in the early morning of April 9th with nine divisions on an eleven-mile front between Bethune and Armentières. This was held by only three divisions, two British and one Portuguese. The Portuguese in the centre were soon swept away, and by midday the Germans had made a hole three miles deep.

The British First Army commander, Horne, had rebuffed the warnings given by some of his subordinates that an attack was impending on this sector. He had also been warned that the Portuguese corps was in a bad state of morale. He decided to relieve it. But with amazing rashness he withdrew most of one division on the 5th and left the other to hold the whole corps front until its intended relief on the night of the 9th. Then the Germans relieved it prematurely. And the Portuguese were in such a hurry that they commandeered British staff cars far in rear. Some of them also, streaming back in panic flight, got in the line of fire of their allies' machine-guns, with unfortunate results to themselves.

The Portuguese collapse led to the crumbling of the British sector north of the breach, but fortunately the southern flank held firm. Next day, however, the German attack was extended northwards to the Ypres-Comines Canal, and Armentières was pinched out. That night the breach was thirty miles in width. By the 12th it had reached a depth of ten miles. Such a depth was more dangerous here than forty miles further south. For in Flanders the British Armies, their communications, and their ports, were enclosed in a narrow "throat" of land sensitive to

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the least pressure and all too easy to strangle. The Germans had approached dangerously close to the rail centre of Hazebrouck. Once there they would have their fingers on the jugular vein.

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On the morning of April 10th Foch received Haig's message that the British would be unable to take part in the projected offensive astride the Somme. In reply he impressed on Haig that "it is as essential to maintain completely the existing front in Flanders as that in the region of Arras." The admonition must have seemed somewhat unreal to the recipient, who already knew that the Germans had breached thirty miles of his front in Flanders. Even Mordacq confesses that he was surprised by Foch's optimism. In the evening Foch received a letter from Haig with the urgent request that the French should take "immediate dispositions to relieve a portion of the British front and take an active part in the battle." Foch at once set off for Montreuil, where he met both Haig and Wilson, and argued that even if he arranged to relieve some of the British troops on the Somme they would not be set free in time to deal with the emergency. And he sought to persuade Haig, who still feared a stroke against Arras, that it was better that the French reserves should be ready to intervene there. As a further concession, he would order Pétain to send a division to Dunkirk as quickly as possible.


This was cold comfort to Haig, who had already scraped his own front for reserves to "putty up" the breach. He had the more reason for anxiety because even the original promise to place four divisions in reserve behind Amiens had not been fulfilled. Although Foch had ordered this step on the 7th, he found on the 10th that it had not begun. In consequence, those divisions did not even reach Doullens until the 13th.

On the 12th, when the Germans had made a fresh bound forward to within five miles of Hazebrouck, Haig issued his now historic message to the troops: "Every position must be held to the last man. . . . With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end." It seemed to convey a warning to the British troops that hope had gone and only honour remained—to go down fighting with their faces to the foe.

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Happily for them the most depressed man was not in their thin ranks but behind the opposing ranks. Ludendorff himself had again come to the rescue of the British. He had begun the attack half-heartedly and he nourished it spasmodically. Major Wetzell, his strategical adviser, had originally urged that the Arras-St. Quentin offensive, christened by the code-name "Michael," should be followed by a second great stroke called "St. George" towards Hazebrouck a fortnight later, as soon as the British reserves had been drawn south. But Ludendorff pressed "Michael" so far and so long that when he turned belatedly to attempt "St. George" he was temporarily short of reserves and munitions. Hence it was launched with only one-third of the intended weight, and, with a sense of ironic humour, rechristened "Georgette." Its dramatic success, which had surprised Ludendorff, led him to dole out more reserves, but never in time or in the quantity for real success. The Germans' initial impetus began to wane on the 13th, and on that day also the British and Australian reserves brought by Haig from the Somme arrived in time to bar the path to Hazebrouck; Plumer, commanding the Second Army, now took over charge of all except the southern fringe of the battle area.

But Ludendorff's attitude was not known to the British. They only felt the effect of his blows, not his doubts. And Haig felt increasing dissatisfaction with the fruits of the unified command. What was the use of paying the price for French reserves if they were not delivered?

Foch had not been idle, but he was intent, even to the point of hazard, on husbanding French reserves for his offensive schemes. On the 12th he gave orders for a cavalry corps to be sent to St. Omer, and also gave his idea of how the battle should be conducted. The two flanks of the breach should be secured "on the south by progressive occupation of the general line Bethune-St. Omer, facing north-east; on the north, by the progressive occupation of the general line of Mont-Kemmel-Cassel, facing south." These lines might have been drawn on the map with a ruler, for they represented two strokes thus: 
"Between these two flanks, solidly held," the enemy's advance was "to be slowed down, then stopped," by

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occupying "successive points of resistance facing east." The British staff seem to have felt that this solution of their problem was too purely geometrical, and that an arithmetical reinforcement of their forces would have been more helpful.

On the 14th there was an acrimonious meeting at Abbeville between Haig and Foch. So grave was the crisis that Milner had come over and was present. Haig laid stress on the exhausted state and thinned ranks of the British Army. He again pressed Foch to give it relief by taking over part of the British front.

Foch made a point-blank refusal "to carry out a relief while the battle was in progress; this operation would immobilise both the relieving troops and those being relieved during the time required for the operation, and this at the very moment when the size of the Allied reserves is scarcely sufficient." Haig then asked that at least Maistre's small Tenth Army should be moved up from Doullens as far as Bethune, and that the Fifth Army, also of four divisions, should in turn make a 'step northward. Foch refused. For he was still convinced that the Flanders attack was no more than a strong feint to cover a fresh blow further south.

His only concession, apart from moving one division a mere ten miles north of Doullens, was to ask the Belgians to extend their front slightly south towards Ypres. They had previously refused his request that they would place some of their reserves at Plumer's disposal, but they were now willing to take over an extra piece of the front, and on the 18th they relieved a British division north of Ypres.

During the interview on the 14th Foch's constant exclamation "Bon!" got on Haig's nerves until at last he retorted, "Ce n'est pas bon du tout!" And, thoroughly dissatisfied with the results, he formally declared next day that "the arrangements made by the generalissimo were insufficient to meet the military situation." It was a threat to the Beauvais agreement and a challenge to the new Supreme Command that could not be ignored.

On the 16th Foch came to the conclusion that the danger in Flanders was more serious than he had recognised, and that "French reserves must be hurried to Flanders." He told Pétain to "prepare" to move a further division direct to Flanders, and also ordered one of Maistre's divisions to be ready to move up

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by motor convoy. To Foch's annoyance, Plumer had completed overnight a withdrawal from the nose of the Ypres salient. • At the sacrifice of the few square miles of mud that had been purchased so dearly in 1917, this withdrawal not only provided Plumer with fresh reserves by the shortening of his line, but frustrated an attack which the Germans were just preparing—to pinch off the salient. Once more in the history of the war a calculated withdrawal achieved far more, at no cost, than many expensive counter-attacks.

On the 16th Foch had driven north "in order to examine for myself the situation in Flanders." On his way he met Milner and Wilson as well as Haig and his Chief of Staff, Lawrence, at Abbeville. According to Wilson's diary, Foch "considered Plumer had sufficient troops now that he had been reinforced by two French infantry divisions and three French cavalry divisions, that our tactical handling was not good, and that he was going up to see and enquire *sur place*. Lawrence, who had just come down from Plumer, said that Plumer was doing all that was possible, but that he had not sufficient troops, that the British troops were exhausted, and that without real assistance he would have to give up ground again. Foch brushed this aside. Haig raised the question of inundations, and showed by map and the engineers' calculations that most of the serious inundations were salt water and would take twenty-five to thirty days, and he urged as he had already done . . . that these should be started at once. Foch said that he had on the 12th given orders for a 'barrage' inundation of fresh water to be commenced, This seems to be quite insufficient. I put to Foch in the plainest terms that he must inundate to full at once, and send up much more reinforcements. Nothing was settled, and he went off to Blondécques."¹

Next morning there was a fresh meeting there between Foch and Wilson, who, in agreement with the opinion of Plumer and Haig, proposed that the Allied armies in Flanders should be drawn right back by stages to the line of the inundations from Aire through St. Omer to the coast. This would cover Calais,

¹ Plumer's headquarters.

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but meant the giving up of Dunkirk, as well as the remaining strip of Belgium. Foch vigorously rejected such an idea. "I refused to adopt such a measure, and I could not share Sir Douglas's fears in regard to the port of Dunkirk."

Wilson's diary gives a fuller account of the discussion. "Plumer had a long talk with me before Foch came in. Plumer is quite clear that, if the Boches attack heavily, he cannot hold the line of the hills much longer." "Then Foch came in and we talked, and Foch gave Plumer his instructions, which consisted of holding his present ground and tidying up. As I pointed out to him, all this is quite simple, provided one has the necessary troops, and quite impossible if one has not. Then Plumer went off to Cassel, and Foch and I had a long talk alone. I told Foch that there were two courses open to him—to accept battle or to retire with [our] left on the inundations. He was entirely in favour of accepting battle on our present ground, his reason being that we shall save Dunkirk, and that we are fighting on the strongest battle line we possess in the north. I told him that, if he did accept battle, then he must act accordingly and bring up troops."

That day the Germans made a bid to capture Kemmel Hill, but were repulsed. Next day, the 18th, they made a vain attempt to break down the southern buttress near Givenchy of the great bulge in the British front. After this failure there was a week's lull in the storm.

Coincidentally with the pause in the German offensive, Foch brought up by rail and motor three more French divisions, making five in all. He would not spare more because he now anticipated a new German offensive, "probably between the Somme and Montdidier." Further, he himself was again giving orders for a French offensive south of the Somme. It was typical, also, that he should instruct the troops sent to Flanders to help the British by making a series of short-range attacks; but these, as at Ypres in 1915, did not materialise. He then, under fresh pressure from Haig, modified his attitude and allowed these French reinforcements to give direct relief to the British by taking over the Kemmel sector.

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On April 24th the new German offensive south of the Somme

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was delivered. The expectation was thus fulfilled. But it was truly a mountain long in labour that brought forth a mouse. Parts of six divisions attacked on a mere three-mile front between Villers-Bretonneux and the Luce. Cloaked by an early morning mist, they broke into and past Villers-Bretonneux, thus bringing them on to the edge of the plateau, from which they could see the towers of Amiens Cathedral on the elusive horizon. Thus the nibble, if small, was threatening. When the news reached Foch he ordered a counter-attack. Rawlinson had already switched two Australian brigades to the spot for such a purpose, and they recaptured Villers-Bretonneux under cover of darkness.

Next day, the 25th, the Germans resumed their offensive in Flanders, but only on a limited front. The historic Kemmel Hill was captured from the French with surprising ease, and the British to the north were in turn forced to fall back. For a few hours a last opportunity of breaking through was vouchsafed to the Germans. But Ludendorff apprehensively intervened to check them from exploiting it. Yet on the eve of this stroke the only British reserves remaining under Haig's hand were two divisions in process of being reorganised and one just arriving from Italy.

On hearing news of the fresh attack Foch's first thought was that Haig might now take the opportunity to withdraw his line to the west of Ypres. He wrote off at once to say that such a step "ought not to be foreseen," and added that he was ready to come north himself if Haig "did not think he could carry out these instructions." It illustrates Foch's conviction of the power of his presence to turn the scales. On the other hand, he also ordered one more division and some heavy artillery to be sent north.

Next morning, the 27th, he was annoyed to hear that Plumer had quietly carried out a further withdrawal in the Ypres salient, bringing back his main line of resistance to the canal. Although this step straightened and strengthened Plumer's line at its dangerous corner, the idea of surrendering voluntarily any patch of soil—or mud—was still abhorrent to Foch.

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There was a fresh conference at Abbeville that morning, Clemenceau coming from Paris while Milner and Wilson came over from England. They had spent the night at Montreuil, there discussing with Haig the momentous question, already debated in the Cabinet, whether they should, "in case of further serious retirement, give up Calais and Boulogne, or give up the French and cover the Channel ports"—as Haig originally considered the less of two evils. At Montreuil Wilson learnt that Foch had not yet started the salt-water inundations, urged on him ten days earlier. This omission increased the necessity of predetermining the course to be taken "as a last resort." Haig now agreed that it should be to fall back south.

The inter-Allied conference began with a breeze. Wilson "referred to the astonishing proposal of the Tiger to send over two colonels to-morrow to examine our man-power." The atmosphere improved when Foch promised to take over the front of the much-worn British corps that was holding Villers-Bretonneux. Wilson noted incidentally that "the loss of Kemmel is a sore subject." It was human nature that the British should find some consolation in the French lapse there, for their own disasters had given rise to an increasingly disdainful attitude among the French staff. Not until a month later would this be suddenly dissipated by a turn of misfortune's wheel.

The next subject of discussion was Foch's proposal for a *roulement* to Alsace, the idea being that reliefs of worn-out British divisions should be compensated by sending them to take over quiet sectors of the French front. The British saw no advantage in this, and suspected that the intermixture was designed to increase French control over their troops. Wilson "pointed out that our 60 divisions had had 300,000 loss, and their 100 divisions had had 60,000-70,000 losses." If they "started a *roulement*, the British Army would disappear." His proposal was that the French should "take some of the punishment." Foch countered with a double-edged argument. It was against his principles to carry out the relief of troops who were engaged in a battle, and there was no use in relieving the troops holding sectors where there was no fighting. Haig did not appreciate this ingenious sophistry, and energetically insisted that the

30 \ 58

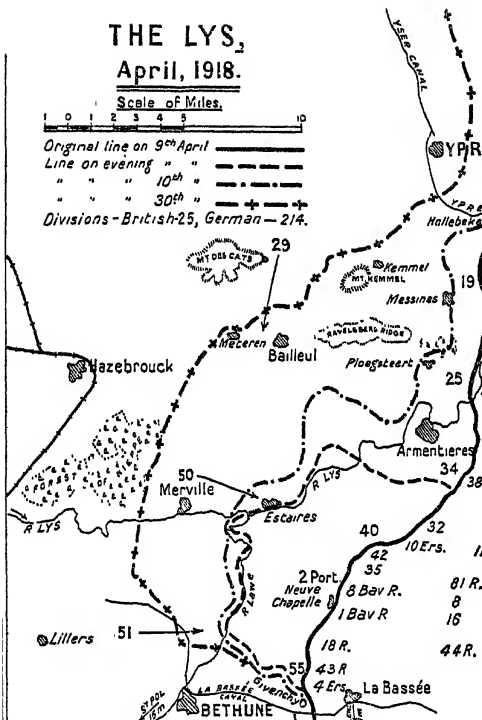


Line on evening " " 

" " " 10th " ~~insert a column of numbers~~

" " " 30th " — + — +

Divisions - British-25, German-214



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French should at least relieve the two British corps holding the line from Kemmel to Ypres that were now sandwiched between the French and Belgians. Foch promised to think this over.

The conference then broke up, and Wilson seized the chance to confront Foch with the question: "Supposing we are again driven back, which base will you cover? Are you going to protect Paris and France before everything else and thereby abandon the defence of the Channel ports, the bases of the British Army? Or will you, in order to cover the Channel ports, risk the protection of Paris?" Foch answered: "I do not intend to abandon or uncover in any way either the road to Paris or the road to the ports. The first is indispensable to the French Army, the second to the British Army and also to the safety of the Belgian Army." "That's all very well, but if you have to let one or the other go?" "I shall let nothing go." "But if you really have to?" "I shall hold on and defend both: nothing shall be let go. There is nothing to let go."

And in retrospect he added triumphantly: "I did not let anything go." But once more, perhaps even more than before Amiens, it was Ludendorff who made possible the preservation of this indefiniteness. At the time it produced more exasperation than assurance among some of his hearers.

* * * * *

After the conference Foch motored north, to discover for himself whether the British had been exaggerating the extremity of their need. This time he seems to have realised that their statement was sober truth. "I was now struck with the enormous wastage among the Allied troops, subjected as they had been to incessant attacks and bombardment by a prodigious quantity of gas-shells." Hence he ordered three more divisions to Flanders, making nine in all. But this addition was diminished by a subtraction. For while he half met Haig's demand by relieving one British corps, "which had reached the extreme limit of endurance," he also relieved and sent south one of the French divisions which had suffered in its first day of battle on the 25th. Pétain insisted, and Foch agreed, that as these fresh divisions arrived those they relieved should be sent back to him. But the precaution was needless.

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On April 28th there was no attack, although a serious alarm. For at 8 a.m. G.H.Q. was startled by a report that the French had lost the whole of the chain of hills behind Kemmel. It seemed as incredible as it would be disastrous, but the report was confirmed by the French corps commander concerned. Haig called his car and raced to the front. After he had gone a third message arrived, explaining that an over-excited French artillery observer had made a mistake !

On the 29th the attack actually came—and was repulsed with heavy loss by both French and British. It was the Germans' final effort, and with its failure their Flanders offensive was abandoned. Ludendorff had made a second great bulge in the opposing front, but had failed, chiefly through his own wavering of mind and will, to cut any vital artery.

Thus the outcome became Foch's justification. Moreover, his forecast of a situation had on this occasion proved to have a rare accuracy. For on April 14th he had declared "*la bataille du nord est finie*," when to many observers it looked, rather, as if the British Army was "*finie*." He had illustrated that opinion by one of his customary similes—of the ripples which rise when a stone is dropped into a pool, the successive ripples growing smaller until the pool becomes still once again. If the battle was far from finished on April 14th, the analogy proved true. It could be regarded as superb calculation did we not know that his outlook and action were governed by a miscalculation of the German intentions.

Furthermore, if his prediction had proved right, as at Ypres in 1914 and 1915 the British troops had suffered an excessive strain in proving it. If British complaints of French reluctance to help them in stopping the first German offensive are seen, when historically analysed, to have been fundamentally unjust, there was just cause for complaint as to the second offensive. This was a paradoxical reflection on the birth of a unified command. If there were inconveniences, ultimately accepted, in sending French reserves north to Flanders, there was less reason in Foch's reluctance to release British reserves by taking over more of the British front near the Somme.

In fairness to him it should be recognised that his delay in

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helping the British was due, not to unwillingness, but rather to a misjudgment of the situation. He was convinced that the attack in Flanders was only a diversion, and he was consumed by a desire to begin the counter-offensive—before the time was ripe. While his consequent care to husband his reserves can be understood, it is rationally inexplicable, save in terms of his theory of war, that he should have opposed every calculated withdrawal which might ease the strain. By his opposition he tended to increase the strain and the wastage, and so caused more demand upon his balance of reserves.

A still greater contradiction had marked his general view of the situation. For his prolonged underestimate of the danger in Flanders was due to his conviction that the enemy's proper course was to continue their attack in the south. And that conviction, although nourished by his theory of strategy, nullified his own lecture-warnings against preconceived ideas of the enemy's course. His own misconception, in fact, was due to a preconception. Some time later, when dining with the British officers attached to him, he argued at length that the Germans ought to have persevered with their offensive towards Amiens and Abbeville, which offered them a prospect of severing the north to south communications and of separating the opposing armies. "Oh ho! Oh ho! They renewed their attacks, but in the north, where they expected to gain an easy success." He was inclined to ascribe the enemy's apparent division of aim to the divided interests of the two Army Group Commanders. "Where we make a single command, they made two, that of the Crown Prince and that of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria." Foch concluded: "I wonder whether Ludendorff knows his business; I do not believe that he does."

If Foch was justified in doubting Ludendorff's ability to ensure that tactical gains contributed to a strategic goal, he did not show due recognition of Ludendorff's realisation that what is tactically possible must take precedence of what is strategically ideal. Foch's misunderstanding of Ludendorff's first principle had been the source of his own misjudgment of the menace to the British in Flanders.

His misjudgment was not, however, the whole cause of the

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delay in sending French relief. For Pétain was a strong check on him, tending to resist and reduce any dispatch of French reserves to the north. Pétain's attitude during the second offensive was a contrast to that when the first began. It is curious that he should have been unfairly criticised by the British in the one case and have escaped criticism in the other. The explanation of the contrast is that they now held Foch responsible. And the explanation of Pétain's attitude would seem to be that he now felt free from responsibility—save for his own army. Where, previous to the appointment of an Allied Commander-in-Chief, Pétain had taken risks to help his co-partner, he now, like Haig earlier, felt that the security of his own army must be his prime concern. This was natural, if ironical.

INTERLUDE

Four weeks were to pass before Ludendorff struck again. Foch's first thought, when the Flanders offensive died away, was of his own counter-offensive to disengage the Amiens-Montdidier line. Fayolle was directed to work out plans for such an operation.

Foch's immediate concern, however, was to build up resources for taking the offensive. Sparing as he had been with reserves, far too many, he felt, had been absorbed. Hence his aim was to create new reserves. With the badly mauled British Army, this was difficult. Although fresh drafts to the number of 140,000 had been hurried out from England, and divisions brought back from other theatres, three months would elapse before it would regain its striking power. Foch was unwilling to admit or allow this, and he set himself to correct it. His efforts caused fresh friction, and during May relations were often badly strained, all the more because British resentment at the tardy aid given in Flanders rubbed against the harsh comments of the French Press and public in regard to the British defeats.

As a sequel to the drain of meeting the first German offensive,

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Haig broke up five of his divisions to fill the gaps in others. After the second German offensive he broke up a further four. On May 11th Foch protested vigorously against this decision. He suggested, as a means to avoid it, that British battalions should be reduced from 930 to 800 men. While his constant cry was for "men," he preferred to retain the original number of divisions rather than to make a smaller number up to full strength. This was certainly a wise policy from the point of view of strategic action, and for tactical action a high proportion of artillery and machine-guns was more important than quantity of riflemen. In his emphasis on "concentration of artillery fire, relatively few infantry," Foch showed an increasing appreciation of modern conditions.

The proposal did not find favour, however, with the British. Haig refused to reduce the battalion strength. But he maintained the cadre, or frame, of the divisions in question and promised to build them up anew if, and as soon as, drafts made it possible to do so. To this end, men of a low physical category, classed as only fit for home service, were sent out as an emergency measure. Haig also, if reluctantly, met Foch's wishes by agreeing to try the *roulement* system, and in return for the French divisions kept in Flanders, five battle-worn British divisions were sent to the French front, where they were given the task of holding the supposedly quiet sector at the eastern end of the Chemin-des-Dames. It was to prove an unhappy miscalculation, and for a third time they would be plunged into the cauldron of battle.

It is significant that Haig here agreed to Foch's insistence against the wishes of Wilson, who was calculating, and miscalculating, that the British forces in France would have to be reduced by twenty-five divisions in August. It is significant also that Wilson, the most fervent of "Frenchmen," was now reacting in alarm from the result of his own untiring efforts to establish French hegemony. On May 12th he noted in his diary: "The French mean to take us over body and soul. They are proposing to pool oats, and to have a Frenchman to say how many horses each country is to have, and how much ration, etc. A paper this morning from Du Cane says that Foch and Wey-

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gand are saying that our battalion estimate is too big and ought to be lowered, etc. Numberless signs of increasing interference." To curtail an Englishman's, still more an Irishman's, free use of horses was naturally the most poignant blow to his self-respect.

Meantime Foch's greater concern was to create new reserves by utilising American resources. For months there had been a continual struggle, open and underground, between the French and British desire to fill their thin ranks with American infantry and Pershing's determination to subordinate all needs to that of creating an all-American Army. If the issue had so far been indeterminate, it was largely because of the slow rate of American arrivals. The March emergency had promised an acceleration. On March 27th the Supreme War Council had passed a resolution, approved by Bliss, that during the emergency "only American infantry and machine-gun units" should be dispatched to France instead of waiting for complete divisions, and that these units would be incorporated temporarily in Allied divisions. President Wilson promised that 120,000 men a month should be dispatched, and for their transport British shipping was to be allocated—at the cost of curtailing the food supplies of Great Britain. And by these means the rate of American reinforcements was to rise from 60,000 in the month of March to 280,000 in June.

But Pershing interpreted the agreement differently from the Allies, and sought to evade the generous desire of his own Government to relieve the crisis. He took his stand upon the pre-emergency arrangement that the infantry of six divisions should be sent in British shipping for brigading with the British forces, and argued that the tonnage in excess of that necessary for these 120,000 men should be used as he wished—for the artillery, engineers, and supply services, with which he could build up complete divisions. President Wilson, although sympathetic to the Allied pleas, was averse to interference with Pershing's freedom of decision.

In vain efforts to overcome Pershing's opposition by persuasion, Foch covered the whole gamut of the vocal keyboard. At a personal discussion with Pershing he declared: "If we do not take steps to prevent the disaster which is threatened at

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present the American Army may arrive in France to find the British pushed into the sea and the French driven back over the Loire, while it tries in vain to organise on lost battlefields over the graves of Allied soldiers." When this appeal failed, a meeting of the Supreme War Council was arranged, and took place at Abbeville on May 1st and 2nd. Here, following upon the arguments of Clemenceau and Lloyd George, Foch at first took the line of assuming that Pershing "in his generosity and his breadth of view, will grant the fairness" of extending to the French Army for June the concession made to the British for May. But Pershing, "noting Foch's special plea for France," took the opportunity to suggest that it was merely a new version of the old scheme of dividing up the American troops.

Next, Foch tried the high note: "I am Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies in France, and my appointment has been sanctioned not only by the British and French Governments, but also by the President of the United States. Hence I believe it my duty to insist on my point of view." But Pershing was immune against intimidation: "We all knew that no authority to dictate regarding such matters had been conferred upon General Foch."

Faced with this deadlock, Clemenceau suggested that the conference should adjourn while Foch, Pershing, and Milner re-examined the question. Foch began the private discussion by declaring that the war would be lost unless his programme was carried out. Pershing replied that even if untrained contingents were brought over to fight under French and British command, they would not be ready until August, when the Allies themselves would have fresh drafts trained to fill their ranks. Foch asked: "You are willing to risk our being driven back to the Loire?" Pershing answered: "Yes, I am willing to take the risk. Moreover the time may come when the American Army will have to stand the brunt of this war, and it is not wise to fritter away our resources in this manner." The morale of the Allied armies was "low," that of his men was "very high," and he did not wish them to be contaminated.

The three Prime Ministers, too impatient to wait longer, came into the room at this moment. Milner met them and, in a stage

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whisper, said to Lloyd George: "You can't budge him an inch." They tried afresh, however, until Pershing banged the table with his fist, and vehemently declared: "Gentlemen, I have thought this programme over very deliberately and will not be coerced."

The discussion was then adjourned till next day, when, after more wrangling, Lloyd George's promise to "scrape together" extra shipping paved the way to a compromise most favourable to Pershing—and in consequence most aggravating to Clemenceau. Preference was to be given to infantry and machine-gunners only in so far as they could be transported in British ships. By an increased effort the British would provide tonnage for at least 130,000 men in May and 150,000 in June, leaving Pershing free to use American shipping for the transport of artillery, etc., as he desired. Moreover, he would only concede that the preference given to infantry and machine-gunners should prevail during May and June, while he reserved the right to dispose as he wished of those sent in June, and to recall from the British front the six divisions brought over in May whenever he judged that the emergency was past. From his point of view he had achieved a bargain wholly advantageous to his plan of building an all-American Army. If he had still to show whether he was a great commander, he had proved himself a masterly man of business.

Although in parting from Pershing Foch remarked, "*Mon Général, nous sommes toujours d'accord*," he was far from satisfied with the compromise, and a fortnight later urged Clemenceau to obtain its revision. But in open discussion he showed an increasing forbearance towards Pershing's ambition to "achieve as soon as possible the formation of a great American Army", that was in marked contrast with Clemenceau's violent impatience. This difference of manner, shown by Foch and Clemenceau respectively, would soon become more accentuated.

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In the weeks that followed this conference G.H.Q. and G.Q.G. were chiefly concerned with the question of the enemy's intention. Haig anticipated a fresh offensive against his front. On May 13th his Intelligence Branch formulated the conclusion that "it seems that an attack on a broad front between Arras and Albert

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is intended, combined with an attack on the Calonne-Lens front." A fortnight later this would seem a hopelessly bad guess. The first part definitely was so. But the second prediction coincided with Ludendorff's desire, although not with his final decision.

Let us imagine that an agent of the British Intelligence had managed to conceal a dictaphone in Ludendorff's room, only for it to be switched off midway in his discussion of plans. The record would have been as exact up to a point as the British deduction, and yet as vitally incomplete. For, actually, Ludendorff was convinced that the already shaken British must be the target for his decisive blow, and had chosen their front in Flanders as the stage on which he would produce the final drama of victory. But he knew that his April blows had drawn to that sector the bulk of the British and part of the French reserve. It was, he felt, too strongly held at the moment. If his next punch was to smash through it, he must first weaken it by drawing away the French reserves. Hence he reluctantly decided to launch a preliminary attack against the Chemin-des-Dames as a diversion. He hoped that thus, without too much drain on his own reserve balance, he might attract a high proportion of Foch's reserves. As it was the sector nearest Paris, the French, he anticipated, would be all the more likely to yield speedily and whole-heartedly to its power of attraction.

While it was natural that Haig should view his own front as the renewed target of the next German blow, it was surprising that this time Pétain should share his opinion. Relying on his Intelligence branch, he no longer feared an enemy attack in Champagne. Nor did his view change when prisoners taken on May 19th and 22nd declared that a German offensive was being prepared between the Oise and Reims. This was the sector held by Duchesne's Sixth Army, and it included the stretch of line just taken over by the four British divisions that had been sent from Flanders to recuperate in useful tranquillity. Three days later several haggard men scrambled into a British front trench. They were found to be French soldiers who had escaped from a prisoners-of-war camp, and they told of an ominous activity behind the German lines. Masses of fresh troops were arriving,

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guns were being dug in close to the front, the prison camps were being hurriedly emptied—hence their own chance of escape. But all the satisfaction the British corps commander received from Duchesne's headquarters was the message: "In our opinion there are no indications that the enemy has made preparations which would enable him to attack to-morrow." Clemenceau also had just received the assurance: "At any rate, there is one place we are comfortable about, and that is the Chemin-des-Dames."

There was one warning which antedated all these. It came from the American G.H.Q. on May 15th, and was based on shrewd deductive reasoning. But because it came from a source that had no direct responsibility, or, more likely, because it came from an "amateur army," it was disregarded. How could it be correct when it conflicted with the diagnosis made by an Intelligence Service that had enjoyed four years of practice, following on forty of preparation?

The American Intelligence branch, however, was pertinacious. The warning was reiterated as more clues were obtained, and eventually the chief of the French Intelligence, Cointet, was won over to its acceptance. But now, as disastrously as at Verdun in 1916, the Operations branch discounted until too late the awakened opinion of its own Intelligence. It was busy working out offensive schemes of its own at Foch's behest. And, besides, it was nourished on the comforting assurances of Duchesne himself.

What of Foch himself, the summit of the military pyramid? He appears to have shared the view common to Haig and Pétain, that the next blow would again fall on the British front. In accepting this view he was influenced by his theory of war—the enemy ought to concentrate, not disperse their efforts. He was also handicapped by the smallness of his headquarters, and consequently tended to rely especially on Pétain's Intelligence Service.

Furthermore, his attention was given to his own offensive project. It would have been contrary to his theory and his nature to dwell in speculation as to the enemy's intentions when there was the chance of imposing his will on the enemy. "The

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offensive alone will enable us to bring the battle to a victorious close and, by seizing the initiative, assert our moral ascendancy." But he also sought material profits. His *Directive No. 3*, issued on May 20th, pointed out that "between the Oise and the North Sea important results are to be looked for, so important that in themselves they compel us to take the offensive; these are—between the Oise and the Somme, the disengagement of the Paris-Amiens railway and of the region of Amiens, which, by restoring to our railway system in the north the use of its routes of greatest traffic capacity, will coincidentally improve the provisioning of the country and the connection between the French and British Armies, and will have consequent economic and strategic advantages."

Hence his chief offensive, "to be ready as soon as possible," was a convergent Franco-British attack on either side of Montdidier, where the enemy's front formed a shallow salient. He also asked Haig to prepare an attack in Flanders with the object of disengaging the Béthune coal mines and the Ypres salient.

The primary emphasis given to economic objects is significant. It testifies to a widening of his outlook and a contrast with his pre-war theory. The objects he sought, economic and strategic, were certainly desirable. And the fluid state of the sectors chosen was favourable to success. The attack would not have to break through any deeply fortified zone.

One drawback was that it would come along what was, for the enemy, the obvious line of expectation. A more immediate hindrance, however, was that the enemy forestalled Foch with an attack along an unexpected line.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WORST TRIAL

NIGHT had drawn its cloak over the Chemin-des-Dames, that blood-soaked ridge north of the Aisne, which within the past four years had become the most famous, or notorious, hill

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barrier in France. There, for the first time since 1914, the low-voiced talk in the trenches was in the English tongue—at least on the eastern part of the ridge and beyond towards the battered city of Reims. Four divisions that had borne the brunt of the assault in Flanders were taking their "rest."

Their first impression had been a revelation of unimagined bliss. What a contrast between the drab monotony of the Flanders scene—of its mud and its mists—and this verdant Champagne country in the full radiance of spring! Restful villages still unscathed by war nestled in the valleys amid green cornfields and leafy vineyards. Even along the trench front itself the scars of earlier battles were hidden by new shoots of grass or a luxuriant growth of fresh foliage. And to men dazed with the continuous concussion of guns the occasional "pop" of some distant piece and the still more infrequent burst of a shell near-by suggested that peace had been tacitly proclaimed on this front.

It seemed too good to be true—this was their first feeling. It was too good to be true—that was their next. In a curiously imperceptible way a day by day increase occurred in the enemy shelling. The incoming troops were the more uneasy because of the defensive arrangements that they found ruling there in the French Sixth Army sector, under General Duchesne, who had been Foch's first Chief of Staff in the war. Disregarding recent experience and newly developed methods, Duchesne insisted on the old practice of massing the infantry in the forward positions. Not a yard of ground was to be given up, and everything was to be staked on retaining the battle zone north of the Aisne. When they saw the ground, the British divisional commanders were aghast at this method of defence. They protested that it placed the bulk of their troops, and even their guns, in front of the natural barrier of the Aisne. They pointed out that the divisions might be trapped and ground to dust between the German front and the river, and that, if so, there would be no reserves to check the subsequent onrush of the enemy. They knew only too well, from personal experience of the earlier German thrusts, what this meant.

But as Duchesne had ignored the instructions of his Commander-in-Chief, Pétain, regarding a deep and elastic system of

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defence, it was not likely that he would heed the protests of his British subordinates. He rebuffed their arguments with a curt and conclusive "J'ai dit." Thus like the neighbouring French divisions, some of them equally anxious, they had to conform to the purblind plan of defence. In compensation they had the dubious comfort of being assured that no attack was probable.

But in the afternoon of May 26th a different assurance came—over the telephone from the rear. The signallers jotted it down in their pink message slips before hurrying out to seek the staff officers of their respective brigades. "The enemy will attack on a wide front at 0100 hours tomorrow 27th inst. aaa." The face of life had been changed by this simple sentence—a sentence of execution. The peaceful prospect had faded as abruptly as a film.

Early that morning a German patrol had stumbled into the arms of a French one, and left two of its number as prisoners. Under an examination, euphemistically termed "special," these men had disclosed that a great attack would be launched next morning. This warning had at last dispelled scepticism.

With darkness comes an unnatural hush. How the hours drag. The hour after midnight longest of all. "Whizz-plop!"—all along the line gas-shells flit to earth and burst with their soft, sucking sound. Doves of the storm, not of peace. They came so fast and thick that the air seemed alive with them. And the earth was soon drenched with the smell of gas. Ten minutes later it was upheaved as if by an earthquake, and the darkness was rent by the flame of myriad explosions. Nearly four thousand guns had opened fire, drowning the pitiful bark of the Allied artillery, while serried trench mortars heaved their cans of high explosive on to the trenches of the infantry. For two and a half hours the luckless troops had to endure a bombardment unparalleled, according to the verdict of the more experienced sufferers, in intensity. And the ordeal of those hours of helpless endurance was the more trying to the survivors, who sat in dug-outs that rocked and reeked, because they were semi-suffocated in gas masks. If these masks, the damp-blanketed doorways, and the lighted braziers kept out the gas they also kept out the air.

Meantime what had been happening on the other side of No

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Man's Land? What was happening now could neither be seen nor heard. But why had so little been noticed earlier? Because of secrecy and camouflage *in excelsis*. Every German artillery wheel had wood-wool wired on to its tyre; every axle was wired with a leather covering; every horse's hoofs were muffled in rags, every chain, ring, shield or ladder was wrapped in straw.

On the railways, no car was allowed to have a label, no troops were allowed to move out of the stations in daylight. On the roads, vehicles were to bear no distinguishing marks, and troops to make no movement by day except in small bodies. And if any such body was caught on the open road when enemy's observing aircraft appeared, it was instantly to turn about as if marching away from the front. Among the inhabitants, all persons were to be re-examined and houses to be searched. In military offices, even the locks on desks and cupboards were to be tested.

The guns were all brought up and ensconced in hiding-places by the night of the 25th. The following night they were man-handled into their positions for firing. To feed them, close on two million shells were carried up and dumped in concealment. The attacking infantry began to arrive on the 16th, creeping closer by nightly stages to woods where they could be hidden by day. They were not even allowed to light fires. Then, when darkness fell on the 26th, they moved up to their starting-line just before the bombardment opened.

Another formidable problem lay in front of their starting-line. For here the little River Ailette ran through No Man's Land, and they would have to cross it before they could begin their assault on the lofty ridge. Of foot-bridges alone twenty-four were needed for each divisional sector. All this material had to be brought up and hidden near the bank.

Success was aided by a strange freak that had a flavour of Aristophanes' immortal comedy. The river bottom swarmed with frogs. And the frogs' nightly concert made a deafening noise which cloaked the preliminaries. The actual bridging on the fateful night was only begun when the greater orchestra of the bombardment blazed forth.

Nature, too, lent its cloak to the German infantry, for in some

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parts at least an early morning mist deepened obscurity created by the smoke shells. Thus once again, as in the earlier breaches of the British front, a blanket enveloped the machine-guns of the defence. A vital asset to the attack, and one without which no real break-through ever took place on the Western Front.

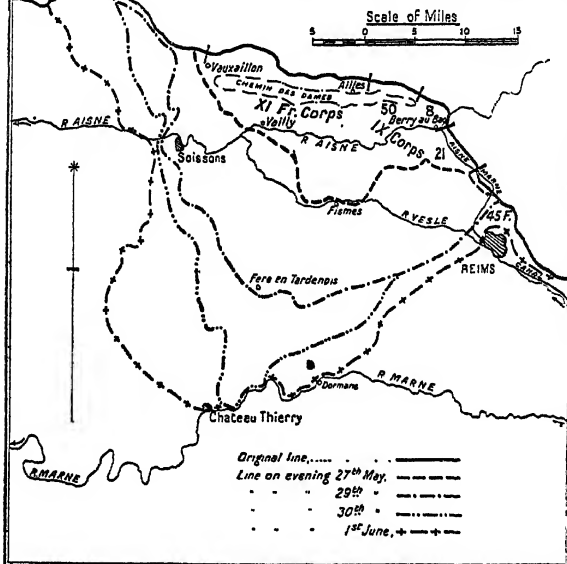
At 3.35 a.m. the assaulting infantry crawled forward to the edge of their own wall of bursting shells. Five minutes later the barrage moved on and a torrent of Germans swept over the Allied parapets. In the main attack fifteen fresh German divisions, with seven more following close in support, were hurled against five.

The front-line troops were soon overwhelmed. The first news that reached one rear headquarters was the astonishing report: "Enemy balloons rising from our front lines." By massing his troops north of the Aisne, Duchesne had all too well ensured that once the German guns had made a bloated meal of the compressed cannon-fodder, the German infantry would find few reserves to block their passage through the rear zones.

Their onrush was so swift through the French sector in the centre that by 10 a.m. they had reached the Aisne, five miles in rear, and seized the crossings along a ten-mile frontage from Vailly to Cuilly. In this achievement they were again much helped by Duchesne, who had sent the one French division that was in support on the river forward to be engulfed in the maelstrom. The unguarded bridges were captured before the demolition charges were even prepared. The grey tidal wave swept on through the open channel in the centre, and by evening it had reached the Vesle. Three days later it reached the Marne—site of the great ebb of 1914. After nearly four years a menace deemed for ever past had returned to a point that endowed it with a demoralising symbolism. Happily for France it proved to be "thus far and no farther."

The ultimate damming of the flood was helped by an initial check placed upon it by Ludendorff's orders. Intending only a diversion, he had limited the objective to the high ground south of the Vesle. And on reaching that line on the morning of the 28th, the Germans halted. In the evening, recovering from surprise at his own astonishing success, Ludendorff decided to

The break-through to the MARNE.



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push in more reserves and to push on along two directions—south towards the Marne and south-west towards Paris.

As a result, the resistance on the easterly flank near Reims was reknit with the aid of French reserves that arrived to reinforce the British remnants. Then, in turn, the Germans were checked on the south by the barrier of the Marne. From May 31st onwards they threw their weight into the south-western corner of the great new bulge they had made, striving to push down the corridor between the Ourcq and the Marne that led towards Paris.

Hitherto the French reserves had been thrown into the battle as they arrived, and on attempting to stem the flood were caught up and carried back by it. But on June 1st Pétain issued orders for the further reserves coming up to form instead a ring in rear. Digging themselves in, they would thus have ready, before the German flood reached them, a vast semicircular dam which would stop and confine its now slackening flow. The calculation was justified. For when the flood beat against this dam in the first days of June its momentum was too spent, its force too diminished, to make much impression.

Château Thierry was the furthest point attained on the road to Paris, and there the erosion was checked by the American 2nd Division, which proved both a material and a moral cement to the line of their weary allies. Thus the menace to Paris passed, and with it the danger of a general collapse of the French front.

As Plumer had, under Haig, directed the defence in Flanders, so the measures that closed the wider breach in Champagne were due to Pétain. It is difficult to put one's finger on any point where Foch exercised a decisive influence. The fact that the one battle was as exclusively within the French sphere as the other had been within the British sphere tended to make higher direction superfluous.

On finds, moreover, that Pétain gave orders for the movement of reserves first and informed Foch later, even when they were taken from behind the Franco-British joint. Within twenty-four hours of the break-through Pétain had moved sixteen divisions to the scene. They included all four divisions of the Fifth Army, which had been placed in reserve behind Amiens to support the

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British. Foch could only approve the step already taken. On the 29th Pétain denuded the Montdidier sector of reserves and also asked Foch for the Tenth Army, posted behind Arras, and the whole force in Flanders. Foch conceded the former, which was dispatched next day. This removed all the French reserves that had hitherto lain ready to support the British front and the Allied joint. "To remedy this source of weakness" Foch confided to Haig the duty of supporting the joint as well as his own front. He also warned Haig that he might have to call upon the British general reserve which Haig was just building up again.

On the 31st Pétain "urgently requested" that at least part of the French force in Flanders and also the American divisions that were training in the British zone should be put at his disposal. Pétain's message came while Foch was in the middle of an interview with Haig. Foch drove off at once to see Pétain, and Weygand came back into the room to tell the British that the situation was "very grave" and the "troops very exhausted."

But Foch was now beginning to feel that Pétain's demands were excessive, and, on meeting him, declared that he had now sufficient reserves to restore the situation. Foch also decided to move his headquarters nearer to the spot, so that he could keep a closer watch on the situation. Next day he moved to Mouchy-le-Châtel, and a few days later settled himself at Bombon, north-east of Melun, in "a domain of tranquillity, silence, and meditative seclusion." It came to be known in the French Army as the "Monastery of Bombon," a nickname that had a dual aptness. For it was an abode not merely of quiet, but of faith.

On June 2nd Foch gave Pétain a note to guide him in dealing with the situation. But its prescriptions were of an extremely broad nature. They merely told Pétain "to stop the enemy's advance on Paris at all costs," and that "the means consists of a foot-by-foot defence of the ground in this direction, pursued with the utmost energy." If it did not require a great military brain to frame such instructions, only a Foch could have generated the electric currents or developed the vocal force that made them stimulating—and gave them a helpful sound to the

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ears of the commanders at the front. So also at the rear his air of calm confidence had a soothing effect. When asked at Versailles about the situation, he replied, "*Pas mal. Les vagues diminuent*," and reinforced his point by drawing a simple diagram to show how each day's surge became less. A sound theory.

Foch also took a practical step—which had a complicated sequel. In response to Pétain's renewed appeal he arranged with Pershing that the five American divisions in the British zone should be moved to the French, there to take over quiet sectors. And he asked Haig to move three British reserve divisions down to the Somme behind Amiens, ready to intervene if necessary.

Next day Pétain pressed for the immediate intervention of these divisions, and of more to follow. It was the story of March reversed. Foch hastened the dispatch of the American divisions, but told Pétain that it would be dangerous to strip the British still further. He nevertheless wrote to warn Haig that if the Germans pursued their advance towards Paris or widened its front, "all the Allied forces would have to give their aid in a battle which, in all probability, would decide the fate of the war." Hence he asked that Haig would prepare to send south all his available reserves, both general and local, and also to consider a thinning out of his front line. Foch's justification for so drastic a proposal lay in a fresh cause of anxiety. Pétain had warned him that a fresh German attack was imminent, an extension northward of their original offensive. And by an overestimate of the German strength the new menace seemed more dangerous than it was.

Foch's demand caused an explosion at G.H.Q. which had its echo in the British Cabinet. But barely recovering from the tremendous battle strain of March and April, Haig had seen his much-cracked front stripped in a few days of all its French and American reserves. He had suffered this unprotestingly, although rather aggrieved that he had not been consulted. It was natural, too, that he should compare the rapidity in rushing reserves south with the tardiness of their dispatch north. And

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he was the more disquieted because of signs that the Germans were preparing a fresh attack in Flanders. Hence he made formal protest to Foch and used his right of appeal to his own Government.

The atmosphere in London was sympathetic to his appeal. The Government were dismayed by the way their Allies and the Allied Commander-in-Chief had been so utterly taken by surprise, and were shocked by the sacrifice of the divisions sent to "rest" on the Aisne. Wilson had become more concerned when he saw that Foch was stripping both the Amiens joint and the whole line north of it, while at the same time he set his face against any shortening of the line. What would happen if the British had to fall back south? "By weakening his centre, by not carrying out salt-water floods, and by not shortening his line, Foch is making certain that this decision cannot be carried out."

On the 5th, when Haig's appeal was received, Wilson warned the War Cabinet that, in his opinion, Foch was gambling with disaster—to the British Army. Wilson temporarily had lost his former veneration for Foch's genius. "It is simply damned nonsense saying he won't '*lâcher un pied*,' and then run from the Chemin-des-Dames to Château Thierry."

Milner and Wilson were deputed to go over to France. If they had left a stormy atmosphere they found a worse storm raging in Paris, a black sky lit by lurid flashes of political lightning. The rather contemptuous composure which had prevailed during the British set-backs had utterly dispersed. Parliament, Press, and public sought relief for their feelings in a clamour for scapegoats—their traditional safety-valve. In Duchesne's case it was amply justified. But the greater outburst was directed at Foch and Pétain. Clemenceau did not escape, and was threatened with overthrow if he did not sacrifice these two.

In such a maelstrom Clemenceau was in his favourite element. He countered challenge with defiance, and gave unflinching support to his chosen instruments, declaring, "We must have confidence in Foch and Pétain, those two great chiefs who are so happily complementary to each other." But he insisted, as the price of this support, on the necessity of "cutting off the

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dead wood " by the dismissal of a large number of the executive commanders " who had grown old and ought to be replaced." " Foch certainly knew it as well as I did, perhaps even better, but, as with many chiefs, the phrase ' old comrade ' was a very potent charm with him."

When Clemenceau produced a list of those to be relieved Foch made no demur, save that he asked Clemenceau to spare those of his " old comrades " who were on inactive parts of the front, " promising that if the occasion called for it he would rigorously apply the same standard."

It was under this double pressure from front and rear that Clemenceau and Foch had to meet the flank pressure of the British deputation. The meeting took place at the Hotel Crillon on the afternoon of June 7th. After Haig had given his reasons for protest, Foch subtly argued that there was no ground for it, since he was only asking Haig to make plans for moving his divisions, not to move them. According to Wilson, " Foch then said he was sure that Haig would only protest in future if he [Foch] committed '*des imprudences*,' and that in that case he would agree with the Field-Marshal." " Foch repeated that if the Boches attacked on a big front from the Somme to the Marne he would call on Haig for all his reserves, as this would mean that the whole Boche strength was being used. Haig agreed to this, but asked why Foch thought such an attack likely, as all information pointed to heavy attacks south of La Bassée and between Hazebrouck and Kemmel, and as preparations were now so forward that these could be delivered in forty-eight hours." If Haig's fear of the enemy's intention was justified, Foch this time had gauged their immediate action.

Milner now intervened to reconcile the opposing points of view. " He asked if it were Foch's intention to withdraw any more American divisions, and Foch said it was not. Haig complained that Foch had withdrawn both the American and the French divisions without informing him. I never saw old Foch so nonplussed. He simply had not a word to say. Clemenceau said that such a proceeding was impossible, and must never happen again."

The meeting broke up in a better atmosphere, with the tension

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eased by frank expression of feeling. The discussion had clarified the relative positions of Foch and Haig, and had shown that Haig's right of appeal to his own Government was a reality. The significance of the episode is to be traced in Foch's subsequent attitude towards his nominal subordinates, towards Pershing no less than towards Haig. He realised the limitations of the title of Commander-in-Chief when that title was followed by the word "Allied," a word that was an amplification in sound, but a qualification in fact.

If understanding brought disappointment to Foch, he adapted himself to the conditions with notable wisdom and tact. Henceforth his "directions" would not be commands, but wishes, or, more often, a formal deed of agreement.

On June 9th the new German offensive was launched against the sector Noyon-Montdidier in an attempt to break through south-westwards and break down the buttress that separated the Somme bulge from the Marne bulge. But it was both too late and too soon. While too late to coincide with the pressure on the other side of the buttress, the preparations had been so hurried as to forfeit secrecy. Thus the French had discerned the intention, and were ready to parry the blow. It was lighter, indeed, than they expected. For while they calculated that the enemy would launch forty-five divisions, and still have a balance of reserves in hand, Hutier had only thirteen divisions, and not all these attacked. To face them Humbert had seven divisions holding the first position, with five more in the second.

Yet there was a moment of danger—needless danger. To meet the attack Pétain had experimented with his new method of elastic defence, a development of the earlier German method. Its keynote was to hold the first position lightly, sufficient to act as a brake on the enemy's advance, while a thoroughly prepared resistance awaited them on the second position when their momentum was spent. But the experiment partly miscarried owing to the innate conservatism of the commanders on the spot. Unfortunately they could plead in excuse Foch's latest directive, which ordained "*a foot-by-foot defence of the ground.*"

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The consequence of the miscarriage was that the Germans, after breaking through the first position, were able to press on and occupy a seven-mile stretch of the second by 11 a.m. But the French local reserves then slowed up the enemy's progress, which was brought to a standstill soon after crossing the Matz. Meantime Fayolle was preparing a prompt answer in the form of a counter-stroke against the enemy's flank before they had time to consolidate their position. For this purpose five fresh divisions were brought up and placed under the fiery Mangin. He struck early on the 11th, and although his thrust did not penetrate far into the enemy's flank it quenched their new flickering impulse to advance. Greater than its material effect was its moral stimulus. The Germans' first recoil, it was hailed by the French as an omen of a greater. And, unlike most omens, was fulfilled.

To Foch himself it was an inspiration. When Fayolle had been inclined to curb Mangin's wish to strike on the 11th, favouring a more careful preparation, Foch had intervened with the decisive words, "Let him." But when Mangin had wished to continue pushing against hardening resistance, Foch had wisely imposed a check. As he remarked, "It was always necessary to stop Mangin." His purpose in breaking off this counter-stroke as soon as it had yielded a profit was not to hoard reserves but to invest them in fresh offensive projects.

These projects had become both more practical and more limited than in the past. And in them a dual purpose was combined—to ease the strain on Foch's own lateral communications while upsetting the enemy's offensive plans. But, in the outcome, none of these projects would come to fruition before the enemy's next offensive—although there was an interval of over a month. The projects show Foch's practical belief in his theory of freedom of action, if they are also proof that he did not contemplate the possibilities of luring Ludendorff into vast salients that he himself could strike in flank—yet another popular legend that is wind-blown by history.

The long lull in the campaign brought no calm into Foch's cabinet. No sooner had he smoothed over the trouble with Haig than he was embroiled with Pétain. The German attack on

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June 9th had instantly aroused in Pétain a hunger for British reserves, but Foch had curbed his desire to be given the three divisions placed behind Amiens, and the early passing of the danger had justified the restraint.

Then, on the 16th, Foch issued a note on the method of defence to be adopted in meeting a fresh German blow. The note was in characteristically broad outline, save for the one point - that both the first and second positions should be occupied "in sufficient strength" as soon as an attack was foreseen. To Pétain's mind this proposal suggested a too uniform and too thin spread of the available forces. His own newly prescribed method was that a thin covering line should act as a buffer to absorb the shock and recoil gradually on the strongly held main position. He refused to pass on Foch's note, and appealed to Clemenceau. Nor was it his only ground of appeal. Foch, anticipating that the next German blow would fall in Flanders, had instructed Pétain to reinforce the French artillery there and to develop the arrangements for sending French divisions there at short notice.

Like Haig before him, Pétain seems to have jumped to the conclusion that preparation was equivalent to execution. He protested that the French Armies had been engaged continuously since March, while "the British Armies have already had two months in which to recuperate and incorporate their reinforcements. On their front of ninety-four miles there is a density of infantry and artillery such as it has never been possible to realise in any of my armies. . . . The British Armies, therefore, are in a position to look after themselves, so giving the French Armies time in their turn to resist a new blow towards Paris; and this is bound to come."

The appeal placed Clemenceau in a dilemma, for Pétain was protecting the immediate interests of France. But he had a horror of command by compromise, and he boldly determined to take the risk of reducing its evils, even at the risk of the French front. Hence, he not merely gave his support to Foch, but also, to prevent fresh arguments when action was necessary, gave the decision that the right of appeal conferred on the Commander-in-Chief at Beauvais would no longer apply to the French Army.

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Foch took early advantage of this unfettered authority to place his veto on instructions that Pétain had just issued for a preventive withdrawal in Lorraine in case that thinly held sector was menaced. A more drastic step still was his sudden replacement of Pétain's Chief of Staff by an officer of more "offensive" character. Pétain, who had not been consulted on the change, was much annoyed; the incident produced a lively exchange of letters.

But at the same time Foch sought to remove a source of friction by sorting out the French and British forces. With this object he suggested that Haig should return the French contingent in Flanders, receiving back the British divisions posted behind Amiens, and also what remained of the luckless divisions that had been trapped on the Aisne.

This regrouping had scarcely been arranged, however, when it was upset by a fresh demand for British reserves, due to a change in Foch's line of expectation.

In the middle of June, after his debate with Haig, Foch had come to share the British view that the next German stroke would be a renewed one in Flanders. But by the end of the month he came to a different conclusion. In his *directive No. 4* of July 1st he pointed out that the enemy were barely forty miles distant from both Abbeville and Paris, that an advance of twenty-five miles towards Abbeville would be sufficient for them to sever the communications between the French and British Armies, while a still shorter step towards Paris would have a great moral effect. These, then, were the two most vital directions which must be guarded above all, although the Allied forces must be ready to parry diversions in Flanders or Champagne.

We see that Foch was still inclined to assume that his opponent would take the course that seemed strategically ideal irrespective of tactical handicaps. Because Abbeville or Paris were the most dangerous directions in Foch's opinion, he implied that Ludendorff's choice would fall on one or other of them. Foch was still following the line of reasoning for which, as a professor, he had castigated the elder Moltke. And his assumption was the wider of the mark because the basis adopted by Ludendorff for his offensive campaigns in 1918 was that "tactics had to be con-

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sidered before purely strategical objects which it is futile to pursue unless tactical success be possible." The basic idea underlying his plans was thus, in fact, the exact reverse of that which Foch ascribed to him. The assumption had, as we have seen, proved a repeated pitfall for Foch. But hard experience had made him wary of clinging to it, and alert to seize on any definite evidence of the enemy's intention.

This time, fortunately, the evidence would become unmistakable, through the enemy's belated haste to mount his attack on a new sector and consequent failure to conceal his preparations. Pétain's Intelligence gathered an impressive array of evidence that the new offensive would come in Champagne—an array perhaps all the stronger because they and their chief considered that the enemy ought to strike in Champagne, so as to draw the French reserves away from the Paris and Abbeville directions. At an interview with Pétain on July 5th, Foch was so far persuaded that Champagne was the chosen sector that he told Pétain to reinforce that sector. Six days later, on July 11th, he gave Pétain permission to draw reserves from his left near Amiens and asked the British to move four divisions south to replace them as a support to the Franco-British joint. Haig was absent in England, but Lawrence at once agreed to meet Foch's request. On July 13th Foch increased his demand to eight divisions, asking that the original four should be placed unreservedly at his disposal. They would be sent to Champagne. Lawrence again agreed, and Haig approved the decision on his return to France next day.

But Foch's request did not escape objection. This time it came from Lloyd George, who naturally remembered Haig's previous appeal, and did not know as well as Haig how well the British Army had recovered from its earlier trials. On Lloyd George's initiative a telegram was sent to Haig telling him that if he thought his force was being endangered, or that Foch's request had a political motive in the background, he was to make a fresh appeal under the Beauvais agreement.

It is somewhat paradoxical that Lloyd George's readiness to support Haig on this occasion should subsequently have been made a reproach against him by Haig's partisans. At the time

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Haig seems to have found encouragement in the telegram. For although he did not consider an appeal necessary, as soon as the German offensive had been launched and had failed, he wrote to Foch asking for the return of his four divisions. He softened the shock by a verbal message that "if British troops were wanted to exploit a success, they would, of course, be available." Whether he would have insisted on the return of these divisions will never be known. For by the time he received Foch's refusal he had also received news of the dramatic opening and success of Foch's counter-offensive. In that his divisions shared. By it the menace of his own front was first relieved and then removed.

Not least would be the relief to Foch himself. Sore had been the trials to which his faith had been subjected, the strain multiplied by the difficulty, which was at least testimony to his impartiality, of satisfying either his countrymen or his allies.

In this time of stress, religion had been his true consolation and Bombon his haven. A headquarters where bustle and display were as curtailed as the size of the staff, its régime had the austere simplicity and regularity of life in a cloister. The "society" rose at seven o'clock, lunched at noon, dined at seven, went to bed at ten or eleven. Punctuality of meals was invariable, and unpunctuality of attendance a cardinal sin. Even the menu was regular, and the fare simple. Foch liked his food, but was far from being a gourmet, still farther from a gourmand. "I never take more than I need." With the meal, a couple of glasses of wine. "It's enough and, in everything, I like moderation." But there was an exception—smoking. "That's my one vice." If he ate quickly it was in part because he was "always in a hurry to get back to his pipe"—a British gift which had lured him away from his old love, a coarse and evil-smelling brand of cheap cigar. It used to be said that he was mute with his first cigar, animated with his second, and sparkling with his third. His puffs became his verbal punctuation marks.

But he found a higher form of solace in a different form of incense. For he would often rise at six and walk to the village church to attend matins and, on Sundays, High Mass. There he

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would be seen "following in his book the prayers of the Mass . . . and, when the tinkle of the bell announced the beautiful invocation 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts,' humbly kneeling and so remaining until the end of the oblation of the divine sacrifice," to rise refreshed and enheartened for the task that awaited him.

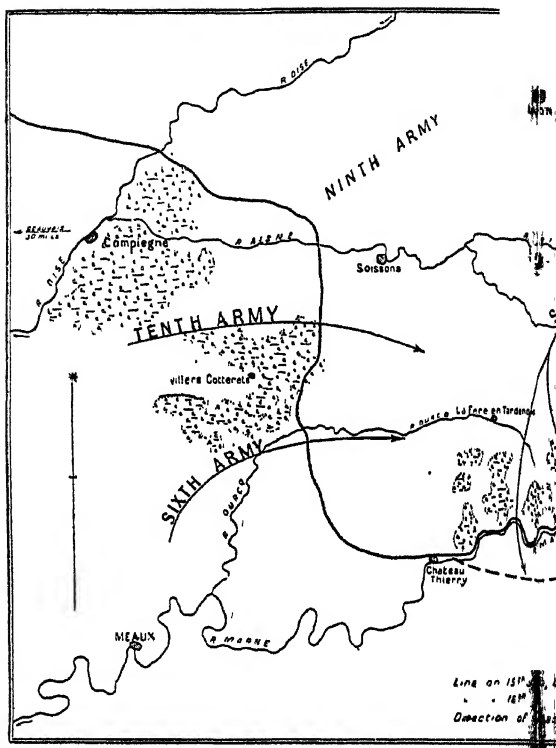
On one occasion Mordacq came to Bombon with an urgent message from Clemenceau and found that Foch was in church. After a long wait Foch appeared and explained: "You see, when I have some free moments—and that does not often happen—I spend them in this abode. Nevertheless I'm a bad Christian, for frequently, instead of praying, I allow myself to slip into meditation, and naturally in meditation on profane matters, on the operations I'm preparing, but the Lord, I'm sure, will not be angry with me. For always, when I leave His temple, I feel stronger and above all less uncertain; it's there very often that I've taken the most grave decisions on the war."

It was on a Sunday morning during the crisis of the German onslaught that Clemenceau himself hurried out from Paris to see Foch. On arrival he was told that Foch was at Mass. Clemenceau, the lifelong free-thinker, at once said: "Don't disturb him. It has acted too well on him for that. I'll wait." In Clemenceau's view, religion was to Foch what, in Lincoln's, whisky had been to Grant. The former's view was certainly true. Foch himself said: "Once my motto was Knowledge and Faith. I still keep it, but now say, rather, Faith and Knowledge. Yes, Faith first." He added: "For that is what matters more."

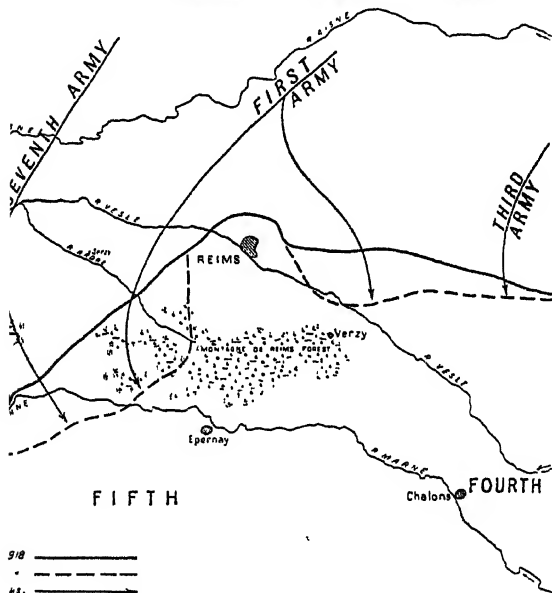
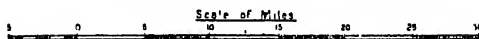
CHAPTER XIX

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

ONE of the most curiously symbolical features of Foch's career during the war was his attachment to a Louis XVI pendulum clock supported on white marble columns which had stood in his room when, in 1914, he had his headquarters in the Town Hall



SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE.



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of Cassel. In 1918 his desire for this clock was gratified by its presentation to him. Nothing could have been more like a pendulum than the campaign of that year—first, a prolonged rhythmic swing to the German side, and then back to the Allied side. Like a pendulum, also, was the beat of the German offensive during the first half of the eight months' campaign. Each time the hour struck with fateful consistency before Foch was able to launch his own premeditated stroke. Nor was he forestalled only in France.

On May 7th he had exhorted Diaz not to be content with a defensive attitude, but to take the offensive as soon as possible, and on June 12th reiterated his demand. Three days later the Austrians launched their first and last offensive of 1918, Conrad striking south from the Trentino against the Italian flank while Boroëvic assaulted their front. Conrad's blow was soon parried, but Boroëvic's armies captured half the Montello and forced the passage of the Piave—only to be forced to withdraw across it. And the loss of nearly 100,000 men in this vain offensive bankrupted Austria's military power.

Austria's bankruptcy foreshadowed that of her greater partner—which would declare itself earlier. Between March and June the Germans had lost nearly 700,000 men. By their intense and sustained offensive they had reduced themselves to insolvency. For the first time in the war their expenditure had exceeded, far exceeded, and already exceeded at the half-year the annual intake of youths arriving at the age of sacrifice. Moloch was still hungry, and could not be fed. In revenge he would consume his priests.

How pitifully puny then would Ludendorff look beside the malign force he had unloosed. A feeble wriggle in its grip and he would become limp. By contrast the figure of Foch would swell until in the popular imagination he bestrode the war like a Colossus. Yet he too, his own spirit apart, was almost as much the plaything of material forces. For months like a Gulliver in Brobdingnag he had gallantly shouted his challenge and chanted his "offensive" refrain. For months like the immortal Mrs. Partington he had applied his mop to the task of sweeping back the ocean. The next time he swung his mop

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forward the ocean would recede. At each further swing it would go back further. The tide of material forces had turned. The ebb had begun. Mankind, lovers of the marvellous, would see the ebbing tide as the miraculous achievement of a master hand. They forgot that twenty-seven double-sized American divisions had now arrived in France. They easily ignored the dwindling balance of German reserves, the straits of hunger to which the German Army and people were now reduced, and the demoralisation which follows in the wake of disappointment when an army finds that it has expended its last ounce of energy in vain.

Filled with the intoxication of victory, the Allied peoples were not disposed to weigh the factors which had brought it. They were eager to see and acclaim a miracle-worker who had turned the cold water of the spring into the wine of the summer. A discriminating analysis could be left to history. Hence legend had a long start.

But it is right to emphasise that such post-prandial delusions were not shared by some of the caterers while the table was being set. After checking the German attack on June 9th, Pétain forsook his natural caution and declared: "If we can hold on until the end of June, our situation will be excellent. In July we can resume the offensive; after that, victory will be ours." The prophecy, so accurate in fulfilment, was based not on inspiration but merely on a sober calculation of the factors.

If Foch did not utter any such precise forecast, he seems to have gauged by "feel" the change that Pétain timed by calculation. For when Wilson visited him on July 1st Foch expressed the opinion that the Germans were puzzled as to what they should do next, and surprised Wilson by the remark that all great anxiety would be past within ten days. Wilson did not share his confidence, and thought that not until "the mud in November" would the Allies "be quite safe" and anxiety removed. Foch further suggested that the Austrian Empire would soon break up in revolution. To hasten the process he was not only urging Diaz to expedite an offensive on the Italian front, but was also promoting plans for an offensive in Salonika,

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whither Franchet d'Esperey was sent to take command, as a spur to the enterprise.¹

Foch's surmise as to Ludendorff's perplexity was a shrewd one. For Ludendorff still adhered to his guiding idea that the British should be the target for his final blow, and, contrary to Foch's opinion, planned to deliver it in Flanders. But he reluctantly came to the conclusion that "the enemy in Flanders were still so strong that the German Army could not yet attack there." Hence he determined on yet another diversion, although ready to develop it if the chances were promising. It was to be made by forty-nine divisions attacking on either side of Reims, and the date was fixed for July 10th—subsequently postponed to the 15th because preparations were incomplete. The principal punch would be by the left fist towards Châlons while the right fist pushed across the Marne and then swung towards Epernay, converging on the target of the left fist. Ludendorff intended that his decisive blow in Flanders should in any case follow five days later. On the 16th, actually, as soon as the Reims attack was under way, artillery and aircraft would be sent off by train to Flanders, and Ludendorff himself moved thither to supervise the staging and production of his final drama of victory. But the curtain failed to rise. The cord was severed by a French counterstroke that had not been designed as such.

As part of his own scheme of partial offensives, Foch had given Pétain orders on June 14th "to prepare an offensive whose objective would be the capture of the high ground commanding Soissons on the west." Foch's idea was that if he could bring the artery of communications under artillery fire "any German

¹ This project at once became a source of grievance to Wilson, whose demand that Clemenceau's orders for the offensive should be cancelled and the case submitted to the Versailles Committee was only defeated by Foch's threat to resign. It would seem that Wilson's opposition was due as much to personal ambition as to honest doubt, for he was at the moment preparing an attractive scheme by which, while Foch's authority would be confined to France and Italy, supreme charge of all other theatres should be given to himself. He was chagrined to find that neither Lloyd George nor Milner favoured this creation of a fresh duality of control.

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offensive towards Château-Thierry would be deprived of its life-blood." The rôle of tourniquet was assigned to Mangin, who had been given command of the Tenth Army. On June 28th he made a preliminary attack to gain a good starting-line and then, to dissemble his greater intentions, withdrew his reserves well to the rear.

In the first week of July Pétain formed the idea of utilising this stroke as a retort to the German offensive that he was now expecting. His plan comprised three phases—first, to bring the advance to a halt by a buffer-like resistance; second, to deliver immediate counter-attacks against the sides of the pocket they had made on each side of Reims; third, when the German reserves had been pushed into those pockets, to launch Mangin's army in a real counter-offensive against the enemy's rear. If Mangin pushed far enough eastward along the base-line of the main Marne salient, he might convert it into a sack for the German forces that filled it.

Events and Foch combined to modify this conception.

Foch was unwilling to wait upon the enemy's action, and preferred prevention to cure, hoping that his own stroke might upset the enemy's. He now decided that whether the enemy attacked or not, he would enlarge his own offensive into a great converging effort to drive the enemy out of the Marne salient. Hence on July 9th he instructed Pétain that Berthelot's Fifth Army should attack the eastern side while Mangin attacked the western. He also desired that Degoutte's Sixth Army, which lay between Mangin and the Marne, should prolong the front of Mangin's attack southwards to Château-Thierry and join in the eastward push.

The enlargement of the French plan of offensive naturally caused a delay. This helped to deceive the Germans, who had gained information of a forestalling attack; when it did not come on the 14th, as expected, they assumed that their own intentions had not been discovered. The delay was also convenient for Pétain. On the 13th he was able to assure Foch that the German offensive was imminent, and he gained Foch's agreement to the idea that the French offensive should become a counter-offensive—to be released after the enemy had struck.

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It was not the only persuasive success that Pétain achieved. A week's argument was needed before he could induce the lion-hearted Gouraud, commanding the Fourth Army east of Reims, to adopt the method of elastic defence and swallow the unpalatable idea of a voluntary yielding of his forward position. When success crowned the device, the world would ring with applause of "*Gouraud's manœuvre*" !

On July 14th an evening raid captured prisoners who disclosed that the German bombardment would begin ten minutes after midnight. And with this last-hour discovery of the exact hour, the last vestige of surprise was stripped from the German offensive. Thus, east of Reims, before the German infantry advanced from their trenches they had been trapped and riven by the French counter-bombardment. Then, in turn, they were thinned out by the machine-guns of the French outpost line. Their momentum had so slackened, their mass so shrunk, that when they reached the real position of resistance they failed to make even a crack in it.

West of Reims, however, the elastic method was incompletely applied, because of the desire to hold the Marne. In consequence, the first position was held in force, its defenders were overwhelmed, and the waves of attack flowed on to deepen the south-eastern corner of the great bulge made in May. The Germans not only pushed across the Marne but behind Reims, so that they threatened to undercut this buttress of the French line. Although the attack petered out next day, the threat had already had a far-reaching effect.

To avert the danger Pétain promptly decided to execute the second phase of his plan with a counter-attack against the two flanks of the new pocket made south of the Marne. But the reserves available for the purpose had already been absorbed in the defensive battle, so that Pétain was constrained to draw on those of Degoutte and Mangin. In consequence he telephoned an order to postpone the arrangements for Mangin's counter-offensive, which was due to be ready on the 18th.

Foch was on his way to meet Haig when, calling at Fayolle's headquarters, he heard of Pétain's message. Full of eagerness to strike, he was aghast at any postponement, and for security

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counted on his theory of the "waves." He at once telephoned to Pétain to say that there must "be no question of retarding, far less of stopping Mangin's preparations." He added that not only must Mangin and Degoutte strike on the 18th, but also Mitry's Ninth Army, south of the Marne. Foch's feeling was epitomised in a comment that had immediate reference to Fayolle: "He does not know the advantages of speed. He likes his task cut up into portions, but I do not; I prefer a tremendous rush."

Hence at 4.35 a.m. on July 18th the armies of Mangin and Degoutte swept forward on their easterly drive. As their assembly had been concealed by the thickly wooded country around Villers-Cotterets, so their assault was unheralded by any preliminary bombardment. They used instead the "Cambrai key," the sudden release of a mass of tanks to smash the wire and precede the infantry waves. The possession and success of this key vindicated Pétain's building programme of 1917. Even so it was not possible to endow Degoutte with tanks as bountifully as Mangin, who had 375, and thus, after overcoming the German outposts, Degoutte's infantry had to pause while a one and a half hours' bombardment of the Germans' main line of resistance was carried out. The chief weight of man-power was also with Mangin, who had ten divisions in the first line and eight to back them up, while Degoutte had originally only one with which to reinforce his leading six. The disproportion was justified by the greater menace to the enemy of Mangin's line of advance—across the enemy's rear.

His opening success was complete; a long bound was made, and 10,000 prisoners were taken before evening. But for all his fiery ardour he soon found difficulty in fulfilling Foch's instruction that "the battle now in progress should aim at the destruction of the enemy's forces south of the Aisne and the Vesle. It must be pursued with the utmost energy and without any loss of time, so as to exploit the advantage gained by surprise." Mangin's attempt to push a cavalry corps through was a farcical failure, proving once again the unsuitability of such an obsolete instrument. And on the second day the resistance stiffened as the Germans brought reserves to hold back the

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advance which, like a sliding door, threatened to close their exits from the salient. By order after order Foch sought to give momentum to the sliding door, demanding that the effort "must be intensified to the highest possible degree." But once the surprise effect had passed, orders were no more effective to overcome machine-guns than they had ever been. And Foch had to watch an inverted example of his "diminishing waves" theory.

The fact that the Allied left wing (Mangin and Degoutte) had been launched to its counter-offensive while the right wing was still on the defensive had meant the dropping of the second phase of Pétain's programme. This nullified the idea that the right wing should draw off the enemy's reserves, by pinching his pocket south of the Marne, before the left wing attempted its bigger aim—of netting the whole salient. When the right wing was able to join in the offensive, on July 20th, and develop a converging pressure, the left wing had lost momentum. Thus the Germans, fighting hard for room to breathe, gained the time they required to draw the bulk of their forces out of the sack, although they left 30,000 men behind as prisoners.

Once they were safely back on a straight and much shortened line along the Vesle, Ludendorff felt able on August 2nd to order preparations for fresh attacks in Flanders and east of Montdidier. Within a week his offensive dreams were finally dissipated, but it is historically important to realise that it was not the dramatic counter-stroke of July 18th which dissipated them. Unlike "Foch's counter-stroke" in the First Battle of the Marne, the fame of his counter-stroke in the Second Battle of the Marne has a solid foundation. But if the first suffered in effect because it hit nothing, the second suffered from hitting too solid a resistance, and thus fell short of decisive results. It is arguable that Foch's impetuosity in overruling Pétain's calculated conception led to the forfeit of such results. On the other hand, it is proverbial that opportunities in war are fleeting. Foch had no wish to "arrive at the station two or three minutes after the train had gone." We now know, as Foch could not know, that there was little risk of missing the opportunity by postponement. But there is not such clear evidence that delay would have improved

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the opportunity in the Second Battle of the Marne, as there is that delay would have forfeited the opportunity in the first battle.

Moreover, the first taste of victory after such deep and bitter draughts of defeat was an incalculable stimulant to the Allies, and its depressing effect on the Germans the greater by contrast of the past. Thus Foch, ever concerned with the moral factors, was well content. In a letter on the 20th he summed up his view of the main result: "The Germans needed to gain a decision quickly. They haven't gained it. That's a great result for us. . . ."

His private feelings also found vent: "We're holding them. We're hitting them in flank. We're kicking and punching them. We're killing off the enemy. Our dead . . . my son . . . my son-in-law . . . are avenged." That he could now lift his own self-imposed ban of silence was significant of his assurance.

Having gained the initiative, he would keep it—by sheer vigour of hitting. Not for him a chessboard conception of war. Battle for him was a physical process, even on its highest plane. The primitive fighting instinct had taken possession of him. His strategy was simple, not the complex masterpiece of art which legend has depicted. It was best expressed in his own vivid illustration: "War is like this. Here is an inclined plane. An attack is like the ball rolling down it. It goes on gaining momentum and getting faster and faster on condition that you do not stop it. If you check it artificially you lose your momentum and have to begin all over again."

Foch did not, however, anticipate early victory. In a letter to Clemenceau he prophesied: "The decisive year of the conflict will be 1919. In the spring of that year America will have reached the climax of her effort. If it is desired to shorten the war, we must wage it with the greatest possible intensity from this moment on. Consequently we must see that our Armies are given all the resources we can muster. The stronger we are, the sooner we shall be victorious and the more we shall be listened to"—the concluding remark shows Foch's growing political horizon and foreshadows his attempt to determine the conditions of peace.

CHAPTER XX

THE ROLLING BALL—OR THE EBBING TIDE

MARKED as the impetus given to Foch's spirit by the success on the Marne, the next "push" would not be the outcome of it, but of earlier origin. This fact is historically significant because of the decisive reverberation of that push.

As the counterstroke of July 18th had been planned as a part of Foch's long-contemplated scheme of limited offensives, so was also the new stroke. On July 12th Foch had written to Haig, proposing a revival of a forestalled project: "The first offensive to be launched on the British front should be one starting from the line Festubert-Rebecq, with a view to freeing the Bruay mines and forbidding [the enemy's use of] the centre of communications at Estaires. . . ."

Five days later, on the eve of the Marne counterstroke, Haig had replied that he saw "no advantage in an advance over this flat and marshy region." He had suggested, instead, an offensive to disengage Amiens and the Amiens-Paris railway. "The best way to carry out this object is to make a combined Franco-British operation, the French attacking south of Moreuil and the British north of the Luce."

More significant still, he added: "To realise this project, I am preparing plans secretly for an offensive north of the Luce, direction east." Just as Foch had not told Haig of his Marne stroke until the eve of its delivery, so Haig had concealed his new Somme stroke from Foch until preparations were advanced. This unanimity in secrecy is rather curious. And Haig's project also was the result of a convergence of minds in which disclosure of thought was delayed.

On July 4th Monash's Australian Corps had carried out a brilliant little surprise coup with tanks at Hamel. Its success convinced not only the Australians of the value of this weapon, but also Rawlinson himself, originally a sceptic. Equally strong was the impression made on him by the evidence of the enemy's declining morale. Hence he conceived the outline of a greater coup. On July 8th he proposed it to Haig, and found that Haig

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had already made a similar proposal to Foch. As this fitted in with Foch's own long-cherished desire, he was prompt in approving it.

After the event, British complaints were made that its success would have been still greater if Haig had not been compelled by Foch, against his will, to let the French share in the operation. This co-operation was certainly a cause of complication, and Rawlinson had argued against it as inimical to the full surprise he sought. But it was Haig, not Foch, who overrode his desire. Foch, indeed, developed its prospects by amplifying its scope. If it would still have the defect of being a narrow frontal push, it would gain an extension of life by Foch's incorporation of it in a wider offensive frame.

The first hint of this development was given by Foch to Haig on July 20th: "It is essential to grip on to the enemy and to attack him everywhere that one can do so advantageously." He remarked that the enemy "seems to be reduced to having two armies," one for holding the line and the other for assault. "This situation presents a weakness which we can exploit by carrying out immediately several attacks along those parts of the front held by inferior troops." Weygand felt that the time had come to crystallise these directions into a definite form, and took advantage of his daily walks with Foch in the park at Bombon to press the point. Foch himself later recounted: "He was constantly urging me to put my opinions on paper. But I always replied, 'No, no, but you may do so if you wish.' The memorandum of July 24th was entirely his composition, but it reflects my views exactly."

The memorandum was a contrast in its logic and concreteness to anything that Foch had previously issued. It opened with the statement: "The fifth German offensive, halted at its very start, was a failure. The offensive taken by the French Tenth and Sixth Armies has turned it into a defeat. This defeat must first of all be exploited on the field of battle itself . . . but the consequences go far beyond the battle itself." For the Allies it would form the base of a new development. The memorandum then surveyed the conditions of the campaign, pointing out that the balance of numbers was tilting to the Allied side, that they

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had already attained superiority in tanks and aircraft, and that the American reservoir was "pouring 250,000 men every month upon the soil of France." "In addition to all these indications that the factor of 'material force' is veering in our favour, there can be added the moral ascendancy . . . due to the enemy's inability to achieve the decisive result which was necessary for him"—the sequence is noteworthy, and very unlike the old Foch.

"The Allied armies . . . therefore have reached the turning point of the road. They have recovered in full tide of battle the initiative of operations; their numbers permit and the principles of war compel them to keep this initiative. *The moment has come to abandon the general defensive attitude forced upon us till now by numerical inferiority and to pass to the offensive.*" In other words, the mountain had come to Mahomet. During four years Foch had persevered with a theory of the offensive under conditions that made it futile. Now the enemy's offensive had made it fruitful. The conditions had at last come to fit Foch's theory—in this simple explanation would be epitomised the remaining months of the war.

But Foch did not choose to look far ahead. With hard experience he had become more of an opportunist and less of a theorist. His growing tendency to opportunism bears a curious resemblance to that of an earlier, if less academic prophet of the offensive—Ulysses S. Grant in the American Civil War. And in the hour of the great change in conditions his offensive horizon was as modest as it had formerly been ambitious.

"This offensive—while not seeking a decision—should consist of a series of movements to be undertaken immediately, and having for their objects results favourable to: (1) the further development of operations; (2) the economic life of the country. They will also serve to keep the fighting initiative on the side of the Allies. These movements should be executed with such rapidity as to inflict a succession of blows. This condition necessarily limits their extent. . . ."

The memorandum then gave a detailed programme of offensive actions:

"(1) Operations having as their objective the freeing of the

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railway lines that are indispensable for the later operations of the Allied Armies, viz.:

"(a) The freeing of the Paris-Avrincourt [on the Lorraine frontier] railway in the Marne region. This is the minimum result to be obtained from the offensive movement now in progress.

"(b) The freeing of the Paris-Amiens railway by a concerted action of the British and French Armies.

"(c) The clearing of the Paris-Avrincourt railway in the region round Commercy, by wiping out the St. Mihiel salient. This operation should be prepared without delay, and executed by the American Army as soon as it has the necessary resources.

"(2) Operations with a view to clearing the mining region in the North and to driving the enemy once and for all from the neighbourhood of Dunkirk and Calais. . . .

"As previously stated, these actions must succeed each other at brief intervals, so as to embarrass the enemy in the movement of his reserves and prevent him having sufficient time to fill up his units. The attacks must be provided with everything necessary to make their success certain. Finally and above all, surprise must be effected. Recent operations show that this is a condition indispensable to success."

The last sentence reveals a noteworthy recognition of an essential truth. After four years of war Foch had come to perceive a fact engraved throughout the previous four thousand years of recorded warfare. If his professional study of history had been wider his discovery must inevitably have been earlier. But better late than never.

There was more originality in the method here seen in bud, which would flower into that of rapid alternating blows at different points, each broken off as soon as its initial impetus waned, each so aimed as to pave the way for the next, and all close enough in time and space to react on each other. Thereby Ludendorff's power of switching reserves to threatened spots would be restricted, and his balance of reserves drained. If such a method had its seeds in history, its visible success under Foch's cultivation would form his positive contribution to the art of

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war. But it was the product of trial and error, so this same process would continue to mark his application of it.

The memorandum then dealt with the future: "It is impossible to tell where the different operations outlined above will lead us, either in the matter of time or of space. Nevertheless, if the objects they have in view are attained before the season is too far advanced, there is reason for assuming now that an important offensive movement . . . will be launched toward the end of the summer or during the autumn." The memorandum concluded with a warning to watch for and be ready to frustrate enemy withdrawals "to shorter lines prepared in advance."

On July 24th Weygand read the memorandum to the Commanders-in-Chief when they met at Bombon. According to the account given in Foch's anecdotage the proposals staggered them. "They took me for a madman." Haig's reply is said to have been: "The British Army, entirely disorganised by the events of March and April, is still far from being re-established." Pétain's: "The French Army, after four years of war and the severest trials, is at present worn out, bled white." Pershing's: "The American Army asks nothing better than to fight, but it has not yet been formed." Whereupon Foch said to them: "Take this plan. Study it carefully for forty-eight hours and tell me what you think."

But it is difficult to reconcile this version of Haig's attitude, at least, with the fact that he had already proposed and was preparing the operation that Foch's scheme allotted to him. And neither Haig nor Pershing waited until the time limit to signify their agreement. Pétain's dismay is more probable. For when he sent his written agreement two days later, he expressed the opinion that the St. Mihiel attack, "in conjunction with operations to clear the Armentières pocket, should form the main offensive envisaged for the end of the summer and the autumn. It will probably exhaust French resources for 1918, but, in doing so, will accomplish useful and definite results." As one of these operations would fall within the British zone and the other within the American, it is difficult to see how they could appreciably diminish French resources, if it is clear that

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he wished to reduce the further French contribution to zero.

He was not alone in his desire. There is no reason to doubt Foch's story of how Fayolle, an old friend as well as subordinate, was in the habit of saying to him after each of the subsequent advances: "Ah, now I hope we shall have a breathing-space!" Whereupon Foch would dash his hopes with the answer: "You are greatly mistaken. We are not going to stop to breathe; we shall, on the contrary, push harder than ever and redouble our efforts." "But my men are dropping with fatigue. They have been fighting for months and simply cannot go on." "The Germans are dropping with still more fatigue. You can't imagine what a state they're in." And so Foch's order would go out for fresh attacks. But they would not always be interpreted in his spirit. Many of the French fighting troops and commanders had grown both weary and wary after four years of being continuously hurled against machine-gun defences. Thus Debeney, the commander of the First Army, immediately on the British right, gave a new word to the English language. "To deb" came to mean the practice of so timing your own push that your neighbour pushed first, and thus loosened the resistance that faced you.

With the turn of the tide many Frenchmen felt a desire to rest on their oars. This was allied with the feeling that it was for the British and, still more, the Americans to assume the burden of the offensive.

To combat this feeling would be one of Foch's heaviest tasks and responsibilities, and to rise above it himself, although a Frenchman, would be one of his greatest successes. Even Clemenceau began to share it once the scales had turned. If his vigour did not slacken, it was diverted into a new channel—that of pushing the Americans forward. And as Foch was intent to push all the armies equally, Clemenceau's desire rubbed increasingly against Foch's. Foch was a soldier, Clemenceau a statesman. The one thought chiefly of ending the war; the other, of the peace after the war. The more France expended her remaining capital, so lavishly spent during the first two years, the less force she might be able to exert across the council table.

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A strong army was as necessary to settle the peace as to settle the war. In the statesman's eyes Foch seemed to be forgetting his country's needs. The first rift between the two was seen almost immediately after the tide had turned. Hearing that Foch was preparing a fresh offensive for August 8th, of which he had not been informed, Clemenceau caustically remarked: "So you are attacking again? With what? You've got some troops left?" Foch retorted: "You need not worry. I've all that I need. I can even say that things are not going too badly."

Foch was equally evasive when Lloyd George sent enquiries as to his strategic intentions. He drafted a vague note which merely said that the enemy front seemed to be "stretching," and that "as all is going well we will continue to act against the enemy." When it was hinted to him that his refusal of information might lead to difficulties, he retorted: "Not at all. If my plans succeed I shall hear no more about it, and, if they fail, the fact that Mr. Lloyd George knew of and approved them will not save me from being undone."

On July 28th Foch sent Haig a brief *directive* and a request to hasten the attack at Amiens so as to prevent the Germans recovering from the Marne stroke. He also told Haig that Debeney's army would be placed under his command. On August 4th Foch asked Pershing to prepare the offensive at St. Mihiel "before the end of the month."

On August 5th Foch made a significant enlargement in the Amiens plan whereby the attack would be extended southward by Humbert's army after Debeney's had pinched out Montdidier. The suggestion came from Fayolle, the Army Group Commander, but seems to have been inspired by Debeney—it promised him an active neighbour on each flank. Humbert was less pleased, according to Foch's account: "Then I threw in Humbert; I said to him: 'Go on.' 'But I've no resources!' 'Go on, all the same!'"

On August 6th Foch sent Diaz another impelling letter. Its chief interest is its evidence that Foch had as yet no vision of early victory. Speaking of the flow of American reinforcements, he remarked: "This rate of arrival is not such, however, that we can hope to end the war in 1918." The immediate need was

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to exploit the changing balance "by redoubled and repeated blows."

That same day Clemenceau suddenly appeared at Bombon in the afternoon, interrupting Foch while at work with Weygand. After sitting down, Clemenceau fished in his pocket, pulled out a folded paper, and remarked to Foch: "Here's a particularly interesting document that I've brought you, and that I've kept to read to you myself." It was addressed to the President of the Republic. The first sentence was sufficient clue to its purport: "The decree of 24th December, 1916, revived for the first time the dignity of Marshal of France. I have the honour to submit for your signature, in the name of the Government and, I can affirm, in the name of all France, a decree conferring on General Foch this high national recompense."

As Foch listened to the words, his eyes became moist, and when Clemenceau finished reading he rose and threw his arms round him in a fervent hug. What dreams were realised!

Yet there was another side to the medal, a practical side, revealed by the last sentence of the document: "The dignity of Marshal of France conferred on General Foch will not merely be reward for past services; it will establish better still, in the future, the authority of the great soldier who is called to lead the armies of the Entente to final victory." Haig, as a field-marshal, or even Pershing as a full general, held a rank that was nominally superior to Foch's, for "general of division" was the highest grade in the French Army, even though its titular holder might be commanding an army or armies. Clemenceau, as we learn from Mordacq, suspected that this flavour of inferiority hindered the acceptance of Foch's instructions. "That is why the Prime Minister asked the Government to appoint General Foch Marshal of France." In Clemenceau's rather naïve calculation the rank might give Foch additional leverage on the British and Americans. He would soon be disillusioned, first by Haig and then, more severely, by Pershing.

If Foch did not share such illusions, he regarded the honour as a reinforcement of his authority and an impetus to greater activity. He felt that the honour had a different and happier meaning than the previous time it had been awarded. Joffre

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was, obviously, in his thought when he said: "It is not a wreath of flowers on a grave. If it had been I should not have wanted it . . . we must strike harder than ever."

Meantime the final preparations had been made in front of Amiens. They formed a masterly mosaic of concealment and deception. All movements had been made at night, aeroplanes patrolled the area by day to check any exposure, and as more and more guns were slipped into concealed positions they registered without any apparent increase in the normal daily volume of fire. Under this cloak of secrecy Rawlinson's Army was doubled, raising its strength to thirteen divisions. Along the fourteen-mile front of the attack the enemy had only six skeleton divisions. The main stroke south of the Somme was to be delivered by the Australian and Canadian Corps, the first already there, and as the presence of both these crack corps would be regarded by the enemy as the omen of a coming storm, a fragment of the Canadian was to let itself be seen and heard in Flanders, while the bulk was being smuggled down to the Somme.

An hour before sunrise four hundred and fifty tanks crawled forward, shrouded by a thick mist that made them seem to the bemused enemy like great saurian ghosts from a prehistoric era. Then, and only then, did the two thousand guns open fire, upheaving the shallow German trenches as if they had been smitten by an earthquake. The Australians and Canadians went forward in an irresistible surge, and armoured cars raced ahead to spread confusion and even to shoot up headquarter staffs at breakfast. Only north of the Somme, where tanks were few, was there a partial check. South of the river the day's final objective, six to eight miles distant, was reached everywhere save on the extreme right, near the French. For want of tanks Debeney used a bombardment, and his assault did not begin until three-quarters of an hour after the British, and then only by his left-hand corps. Another joined in four hours later. Next morning his right wing advanced on either side of Montdidier, pinching it out. On the 10th Humbert's army was launched forward and penetrated nearly four miles.

By now Rawlinson's advance had lost its momentum, partly by contact with the rough surface of the 1916 battlefields, partly

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through lack of reserves, but, above all, by the passing of surprise. As in all frontal attacks, the further the defenders were pushed back the more their resistance was augmented by the snowball accumulation of reserves. It could be loosened by flank action, as the Germans had so often shown, but here this was restricted by the narrowness of the British break-through. And although Debeney's advance was sufficient to cover Rawlinson's flank, it was neither fast nor forceful enough to uncover the flank of Rawlinson's opponents.

If the Allies could not attain the speed and depth of the earlier German inroads, a rapid series of limited advances would suffice to expedite the ebbing tide and to accelerate the decline of the enemy's strength. But the exhilaration of success seems to have unbalanced Foch's judgment, and to have loosened his never too firm grasp of the limited method—of sudden springs carefully prepared, and stopping where the resistance stiffened. Instead, the cry "*Attaquez*" or "*Allez-y*" sprang too naturally to his lips. It is curious that he himself should have adopted the parrot as the symbol for one of his most celebrated parables: "See how it sets out, at the bottom of its ladder, to clamber up to its grain; it lays hold of the first rung and only lets go when it is sure of reaching the next. Thus it finally reaches the last rung and snatches the grain. I am this parrot." On Pétain's lips it would have been a perfect metaphor. But on Foch's it had a discordance with his actions. His cry was too parrot-like for his claws to be parrot-like. A truer metaphor would have been that of the indomitable hero who climbs the greasy pole.

On August 10th, when the offensive had virtually come to a standstill just short of the Roye-Chaulnes position, Foch sent Haig a *directive* "to push towards Ham"—as deep again as he had already gone. But Foch added a wish that Haig would "prepare as soon as possible an operation by the British Third Army in the general direction of Bapaume and Péronne in order to shake the enemy's line and immediately exploit any break." From the hopelessness of the first course and the helpfulness of the second would be evolved a further stage in Foch's offensive method.

Haig visited the front to see the situation for himself. It

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made him less responsive to Foch's forward surge, and he suspended the offensive on the 11th. That evening Foch went to see him again, but gained no more satisfaction than Haig's promise to reconnoitre the German position afresh.

On the 12th Foch issued a new *directive* which said: "It is important to obtain from the battle in progress the maximum result that it can yield and to exploit to the utmost the deep penetration made on the 8th, 9th, 10th August. . . ." He conceded that the offensive should concentrate against "the important points of the sector" instead of "pushing forward uniformly along the whole front." With this idea he gave instructions for a combined attack by Debeney and Rawlinson's right wing to "carry the network of roads around Roye," and another attack by Rawlinson's centre. Once more, an addition restored reality and opportunity to the *directive*: "These results can be immensely amplified by an extension of the attacks on the two flanks," by Byng's Third Army north of the Somme and by Mangin's army east of the Oise. "The results obtained by the French Third Army, unaided, show what can be expected from the extension of offensive actions on the flank of a victorious attack."

In the afternoon Foch met Haig and Pétain at Flixecourt, near Amiens, where they had been summoned for an audience with the King. Haig there expressed his agreement with Foch's *directive*, and the renewed offensive was fixed for the 16th.

But on the 14th, as Foch was on his way to Pétain's headquarters, he was overtaken by an air-borne letter from Haig. It said that the enemy's artillery fire had increased, that the Roye-Chaulnes position was solidly held, and that Haig had therefore decided to postpone the attack, which "might be made conjointly with the action on the front of the Third Army. . . ."

Foch at once replied that he saw no necessity for "subordinating the date" of Rawlinson's and Debeney's attacks to that of Byng. And on his return to Bombon, he sent a further and sharp remonstrance, declaring that Haig's action would compromise Debeney's army and "have the most serious consequences."

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Next day Foch drove to his old abode at Sarous, where he met Haig. There was a lively argument, in which Haig stubbornly held his ground, contending that the indirect method was more sure, and that Byng's advance would act as a lever to loosen the resistance south of the Somme. Haig gained his point, and Foch gave way. His concession was due, however, not merely to Haig's force of persuasion but to a cold douche of doubt from Debeney himself, received just before the interview with Haig.

By this yielding, economy of force was added to the advantage of Foch's new strategic method, which would now develop an ever-swelling expansion of blows to the acceleration of the enemy's reflux. After a preliminary move on the 17th, Mangin's new attack developed on the 20th. Next day Byng chimed in, and on the 23rd opened in full blast. Rawlinson and Debeney now tried to resume their advance, but the latter, especially, made small progress, and Foch thus came to realise that the resistance in the centre could only be loosened by leverage on the flanks. To extend this, Horne's First Army made a bound towards the northern end of the Hindenburg Line on August 26th, and on September 2nd the Canadian Corps broke the Drocourt-Quéant switch. Although the Germans rallied behind the strong barrier afforded by the Canal du Nord, this menacing advance induced Ludendorff to sanction a withdrawal to the old Hindenburg Line along the whole front, as far south as Soissons. An additional incentive to this withdrawal was given by Mangin's pressure at the other extremity. At the same time Ludendorff also shortened and straightened his line by evacuating the greater part of the bulge made by his April offensive in Flanders.

Thus the sequel to the disengaging offensive of August 8th had far exceeded the modest objective which Foch had contemplated. The Germans had given up almost the whole of the territory gained from the British in their first two great offensives, and had left over 70,000 prisoners in British cages, while the French captures brought the total receipts from the three weeks' "tattoo" to nearly 100,000. Of all the ground gained by the German offensives the only substantial stretch still preserved

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was that between the Chemin-des-Dames and the Vesle. Elsewhere, their main line of resistance was now on their starting-line of March 21st, although the Allies were still kept at arm's length from it by strong outlying positions.

Still more significant, however, if yet unknown to Foch, was the moral effect on Ludendorff. This effect had sprung from the shock of August 8th alone, if accentuated by its sequel. To Ludendorff in reflection, "August 8th was the black day of the war. . . . It put the decline of our fighting power beyond doubt. . . . The war would have to be ended." His actions at the time fully endorse his reflection. He informed the Emperor and the Chancellor that peace negotiations ought to be opened before the situation became worse, as it must. The Kaiser agreed: "I see that we must strike the balance. We are at the end of our resources. The war must be ended." The strategic aim now became the negative one of producing a stalemate situation favourable to easy terms. At an Imperial Council held at Spa the conclusion was that "we can no longer hope to break the war-will of our enemies by military operations"; "the object of our strategy must be to paralyse the enemy's war-will gradually by a strategic defensive."

But the attainment of this limited object was handicapped by Ludendorff's inability to recover mentally from the shock of the surprise on August 8th. He failed to formulate any clear strategic plan to fulfil the new object. His irresolution combined with Rupprecht's resolution to imperil that object. For Rupprecht, as the Army Group Commander, had overruled the local army commanders' wish to fall back at once behind the upper Somme, and had cemented the breach by hurrying all possible reinforcements to the spot. But thereby he drained his reserves almost to bankruptcy, and in consequence would be unable to meet the next charge—on the Hindenburg Line. And this would soon develop.

The unexpected immensity of the sequel to August 8th brought a great change in Foch's outlook. On August 11th Wilson came to meet Foch at Sarcus, and recorded: "He has not yet mounted his Marshal's clothes, but will tomorrow when he sees the King. He very soon began about the 59-61 divisions [which

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Foch insisted that the British should maintain in France]. I told him that we could not keep up that number, and might drop to 40-43. He said he would resign, that England was prolonging the war by two years, that she had the men and would not use them, and so on. . . . I said he totally ignored our efforts in other theatres, our Navy, mercantile marine, industries, etc. . . . I told him that if he wanted more divisions all he had to do was to put his boys down to 18½ in, as we were doing, and then to turn the American divisions from 12 battalions of 1,000 men to 9 battalions of 900. He said he did not command the American Army, and I said, 'Nor do you the British.' It was nice and breezy while it lasted, but it did good, and we were as good friends as ever after it."

More historically significant is the continuation of this entry in Wilson's diary: "Du Cane¹ came to the train for lunch and told me Foch's plans for this year and next. Foch wants this year to disengage the lateral railways at Amiens and Hazebrouck, Compiègne, and St.-Mihiel. Next year he wants to seize the Boche lateral railway of Lille-Hirson-Mézières-Metz; when that is done he thinks he can deal with the Boches, as it were, in two theatres—north and south." On the other hand: "Haig at dinner said we ought to hit the Boche now as hard as we can, then try to get peace this autumn."

If Foch did not until later conceive that the war might be ended that year, before the end of the month he came to envisage a far wider development of his offensive campaign. The new plan affected the last of the original disengaging offensives that was still unfulfilled—the American operation to remove the St. Mihiel salient. The development of Foch's outlook first expanded and then contracted this operation, with fateful results on the course of the war.

The wonderful opening success of Haig's attack on August 8th had made Foch even more eager to hasten the operation on the St. Mihiel salient, a fang embedded sixteen miles deep in the French front. During four years it had galled France bodily and mentally. By its interruption of the railway from Paris to

¹ British representative with Marshal Foch.

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Nancy it was a check on any French offensive in Lorraine, while in 1916 it had been a serious choke on the defence of Verdun. Once the fang was extracted, new vitality would be given to offensive strategy.

On August 9th Foch besought Pershing and Pétain to accelerate the preparations, arranging that the scattered American divisions should be assembled and formed into an army in the area of its initial action, and that, to make up the American deficiency, the French should furnish most of the artillery. Two days later the staff of the First American Army moved to the area and there framed a plan more ambitious than that suggested at Bombon on July 24th. It was a telescopic plan, that could be extended, after pinching off the Salient, to break through its base-line—the *Michel Stellung*, a still incomplete inner barrier against any sudden rupture of the front. It was, indeed, a frail protection for the most sensitive sector of front between Switzerland and the English Channel. A threat here need only penetrate a short distance before it would imperil the Germans' whole position in France. For it would cut the great lateral railroad at the end nearest Germany, and would turn the flank of all the successive lines to which the Germans could retire short of their own frontier. Further, such a threat had the vital economic promise of releasing the Briey iron region and menacing the Saar Basin—upon which the Germans largely depended for their munitions.

Force to fulfil these telescopic possibilities was provided by the American plan, which visualised the use of 15 double-sized American divisions and 4 French divisions. Foch approved the plan on August 17th, and added to it not only 6 more French divisions, but an extension of the frontage and the direction "to strike the heaviest blow possible and secure the maximum results." In his *directive* he prescribed a line through Mars-le-Tour, close to Metz, as the objective.

But on August 30th a shadow fell across its path. Foch came to the American headquarters at Ligny-en-Barrois with a radically different plan. The change had its origin in Haig's intervention. August 8th and its sequel had given him a clear perception of the Germans' moral and material decline. Dis-

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regarding the cautious counsels of the British Government, he was now willing to stake his judgment and his position on an assault of the Hindenburg Line—the strongest artificial defences on the whole German front. But he was anxious to reduce the risk of failure and increase the profit of success; he therefore urged Foch in a letter of August 27th to change the main American attack from a divergent to a convergent direction. It would thus, he calculated, have a quicker and stronger reaction upon the German armies facing him, and by loosening their grip would ease his task—as he would similarly ease the Americans'.

Foch lent his ear the more readily to Haig's argument because it accorded with this own predisposition and the enlargement of his horizon. He had now begun to feel that the war might be finished in 1918 instead of 1919. And his enthusiastic assurance led him to transform his new method of alternating limited attacks at different points into a simultaneous general offensive: "*Tout le monde à la bataille !*" By it he seems to have hoped not merely to stretch and crack the German resistance, but even to cut off and surround the German armies between his converging pincers—British on one side and American on the other. Pétain, when consulted, was quite agreeable to the change of plan, which promised to draw the German reserves to either flank and leave the French a clearer path in the centre.

Thus when Foch came to see Pershing he proposed that the St. Mihiel plan should be modified to a mere excision of the salient. This operation was to be a preliminary to the American main attack—now to be launched north-west towards Mézières instead of north-east towards Metz. Foch further proposed that while Pershing's army operated on the easier ground west of the Argonne, a Franco-American army under a French commander should attack the more difficult sector between the Argonne Forest and the Meuse. He also proposed to send General Degoutte to hold Pershing's hand and guide his tactical decisions.

The change of plan came as a shock to Pershing, and the other proposals as an affront. The interview was lively and the atmosphere grew heated. Foch hinted that he would appeal to

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President Wilson—and the threat had as little effect on Pershing as when previously used. Foch implied that Pershing was trying to shirk his share of the battle, and Pershing retorted that he was fully ready to fight “as an American Army.” Foch caustically suggested that even for St. Mihiel Pershing could not raise an all-American Army, but had to depend on his allies for guns, tanks, and aircraft. Pershing retaliated with the reminder that by Allied request the Americans had shipped only infantry and machine-guns during the spring crisis. Foch then tried to assert his authority, declaring: “I must insist on the arrangement,” whereupon Pershing delivered the forthright rejoinder: “Marshal Foch, you may insist all you please, but I decline absolutely to agree to your plan. While our army will fight wherever you may decide, it will not fight except as an independent American Army.”

Foch wisely dropped the argument. Picking up his maps and papers, he turned towards the door. His pale and tired face revealed his emotional strain. But on the threshold he paused, handed Pershing a memorandum of his proposal, and, with his indomitable optimism, remarked that he thought Pershing would eventually arrive at the same conclusion as he had. Reflection, however, only confirmed Pershing in the opinion that Foch would give way. Next day Pershing sent a written reply. “I can no longer agree to any plan which involves a dispersion of our units.” “Briefly, our officers and soldiers alike are, after one experience, no longer willing to be incorporated in other armies. . . . It is far more appropriate at the present moment for the Allies temporarily to furnish the American Army with the services and auxiliaries it needs than for the Allies to expect further delay in the formation of the American Army.”

He recognised the potential value of the convergent attack, but dwelt upon the difficulties of American participation. “Since our arrival in France our plans . . . have been based on the organisation of the American Army on the front St. Mihiel-Belfort. All our dépôts, hospitals, training areas and other installations are located with reference to this front, and a change of plans cannot be easily made.”

Pershing did not attempt to hide his dislike of limiting the

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St. Mihiel attack, and suggested that instead of switching at once to the Meuse-Argonne he should exploit the St. Mihiel attack to the full, and later, if necessary, mount a fresh attack "either in the region of Belfort or Lunéville." Not yet vouchsafed an intuition of victory that autumn, he suggested that these attacks would fit in with the ultimate American aim of taking charge "during January and February" of "the sector from St. Mihiel to Switzerland." "However," he said, "it is your province to decide as to the strategy of operations, and I abide by your decision."

"Finally, however, there is one thing that must not be done, and that is to disperse the American forces among the Allied armies; the danger of destroying by such dispersion the fine morale of the American soldier is too great. If you decide to utilise the American forces in attacking in the direction of Mézières, I accept that decision, even though it complicates my supply system and the care of my sick and wounded, but I do insist that this American Army be employed as a whole. . . ."

The letter was carried to Bombon, where it became a bomb-shell. Foch realised that it was a new declaration of independence, and that American co-operation in his continued general offensive could only be obtained at the price of a concession. But Pershing's actually cost America more.

A fresh conference was arranged for September 2nd, whereat Pershing gave up his own plan for a share in Foch's and Foch conceded Pershing's claim to American unity. The concession was wrung from him by his own realisation that without the Americans his right pincer would have a weak and worn point. But he left Pershing to choose whether he would operate west of the Argonne, where the ground would be easier, or east of it, where supply from the base would be simpler. And Pershing fatefully decided: "We'll fight east of the Argonne." Thus, although he had given up his own plan unwillingly, Pershing's was the ultimate responsibility for taking the stiffer of the two remaining courses.

Another decision made it still harder. Foch wanted the general offensive to open on September 20th if possible. Rather than delay it, he suggested that the St. Mihiel attack should be

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abandoned. Pershing was unwilling, and argued that he must pinch off the St. Mihiel wedge as a safeguard to his rear when attacking in the Meuse-Argonne. Again his claim was conceded. But it meant that he had not time to switch divisions from one battlefield to the other, and that he had to use raw divisions for the second, the greater and harder task.

Each attack interfered with the other, and the consequences were compound. The plan of cutting through the flanks of the St. Mihiel salient was replaced by a convergent stroke against the two faces. The force for the operation was cut down by more than half, and the left pincer was whittled down to a single division. Foch, indeed, suggested that it should be dropped altogether. This one-sidedness helped the Germans to slip out of the salient before they were cut off.

For weeks they had been meditating and preparing to forestall the attack by a retreat. And when the Americans advanced to the assault at 5 a.m. on September 12th, the Germans had actually begun the withdrawal during the night. The four-hour bombardment from three thousand guns, mostly French, was largely wasted on empty trenches. This fact has led to the satirical description as "the sector where the Americans relieved the Germans." If there is some truth in the description, it is not the whole truth. For although the German command was as well aware of the impending blow as most of the café-loungers of France, and were not deceived by the pretence of staging a battle in Alsace, they hesitated too long over their decision. Thus they were caught in the act of retirement, and without the support of a large part of their artillery. And, with the attack following swiftly on their heels, their methodical arrangements suffered a dislocating jar.

Soon after midday the American right-hand corps under Liggett had reached its second day's objective! So did part of its neighbour. One brigade commander walked on unescorted to reconnoitre. Not a shot came, not a German was seen. It is said that he sent back a message to his superior: "Let me go ahead, and I'll be in Metz, and you'll be a field-marshal." But both Metz and the marshal's baton had to be foregone. Pershing felt himself tied by Foch's revised plan and refused all pleas for

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a further bound—which might have broken through the base-line. The limitation of aim had also led Pershing to restrict the free action of his pincers within their limited zone. The consequence was that all but some four thousand of the Germans in the salient slipped out before the right and left pincers closed next morning.

That day the two "pincer" corps moved up into line with Liggett's facing the Michel Stellung. There they stopped. Ant-like men in field-grey could be seen frantically digging, working on trenches which hitherto had only been marked out. The enemy commander, Fuchs, suffered a nerve-spasm—the danger of a break-through was "very great and continually threatening." When word came that "the enemy had not followed," it seemed too good to be true. Not until the 14th had he collected sufficient troops to fill the numerous gaps in the base-line. The eager Americans, held back for reasons few of them appreciated, had to watch the barricade being raised in front of their eyes. Their impatience was increased by the ease of their first trial run—by the time it came to a halt in front of the base-line they had, taken over 15,000 prisoners at a cost of less than 8,000 casualties.

What would have happened if Foch had not changed his mind? If the American attack at St. Mihiel had been pursued to the full, as Pershing desired, could it have penetrated so fast and so far as to have decisive results, causing a collapse of the German front? Pershing certainly thought that "an immediate continuation would have carried us well beyond" the Michel line "and possibly into Metz." Dickman, in charge of the right pincer, was still more emphatic: "The failure to push north from St. Mihiel with our overwhelming superiority of numbers will always be regarded by me as a strategical blunder for which Marshal Foch and his staff are responsible. It is a glaring example of the fallacy of the policy of limited objectives."

One may remark that St. Mihiel was, curiously, the one occasion when Foch strictly practised the limited method that he had been led to preach, the one occasion on which he checked the rolling ball and curbed his own desire to avoid checking it. Whereas he was usually the last to admit that the enemy's resistance had hardened, making further progress futile and effort

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wasteful, in this case he stopped the advance before resistance had even begun to harden. It was a reversion to his old theory that tactics should be subordinated to strategy. How ironical if he thereby forfeited the opportunity of a tactical break-through at the most vital strategic point !

In gauging the possibility, other opinions affect the balance. Liggett—a shrewd, cool reasoner—considered that it “existed only on the supposition that our army was a well-oiled, fully co-ordinated machine, which it was not as yet.” The opposing Army Group Commander, Gallwitz, has also expressed doubt whether the Michel line could have been overrun without a freshly mounted attack on a large scale.

This argument applies, however, to the actual attack rather than to the wider original plan, which would have had two important factors in its favour. The first was numerical—that the bulk of the German reserves were massed in the far west, to dam Haig's advance. The second was geographical. Almost every attempted break-through in the war had been based on the idea of a single penetration. The simultaneous Artois and Champagne attacks of September 25th, 1915, had formed an exception, they had been too far apart to cause such immediate strain on the sector between as might have led to its collapse. The convergent Argonne and Cambrai thrusts of Foch's new plan had also an appearance of duality, but had an even wider interval between. In contrast, the acute salient at St. Mihiel offered ideal conditions for a dual penetration. If two powerful attacks had cut through the flanks of the salient its defenders would have dissolved into chaos—and have been “caged.” Through this collapsed centre a fresh force might then have driven, with a clear path between the protecting wings. On a reduced scale the actual attack fulfilled this process as far as it went, but the wings were held back, and there was no fresh force to pass through the centre. The incompleteness of the Michel Stellung and the time taken before it was adequately garrisoned suggest that on September 12th, or even the 13th, it could have been broken on a wide front.

It will always be a question how far the Americans could have advanced beyond the breach. Here the main brake would have

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been, not defences and defenders, but supplies. For decisive results the Americans would at least have had to reach the Longuyon-Thionville stretch of the lateral railway, over twenty miles beyond the Michel Stellung, and further still to interrupt the line running back from Longuyon through Luxembourg. The road blocks and transport difficulties actually experienced in the limited advance do not encourage an optimistic answer. Thus the American advance might have come to a halt before it reached the vital rail artery, and might not have reached it quick enough to cause a sudden collapse.

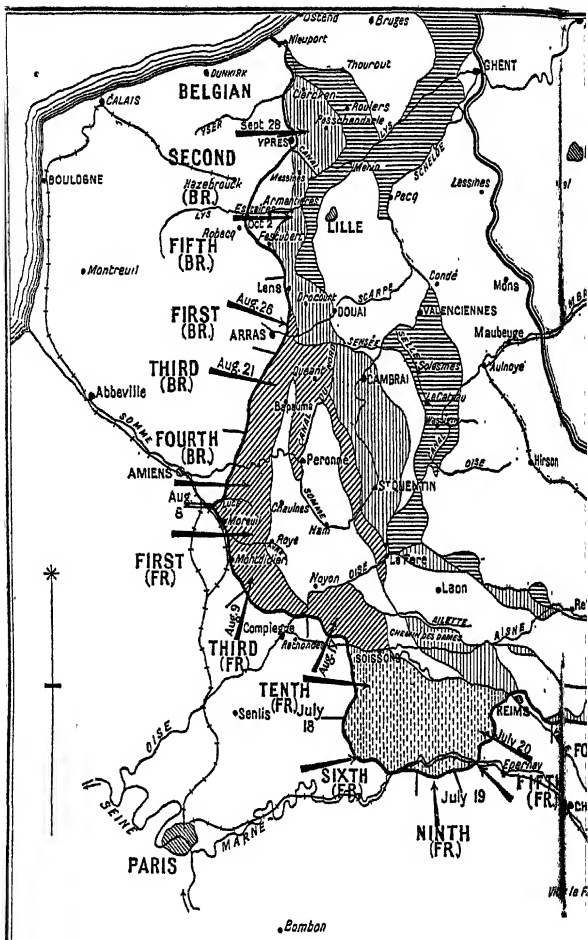
But it seems historically probable that an advance beyond the St. Mihiel salient would have brought more profit for less cost than the advance in the Meuse-Argonne. Who should know better than Gallwitz? His verdict is that "a successful attack launched against the Michel Stellung would have been more important than the successes gained along the Meuse and in the Argonne." Further, "an American advance to Longuyon would have been a blow which we could not have borne." The war that was to end on November 11th might thus have ended earlier—if Foch had not changed his plan. The irony of the changed direction was that the advance would not only fall short but would fail to help Haig.

CHAPTER XXI

"TOUT LE MONDE À LA BATAILLE"

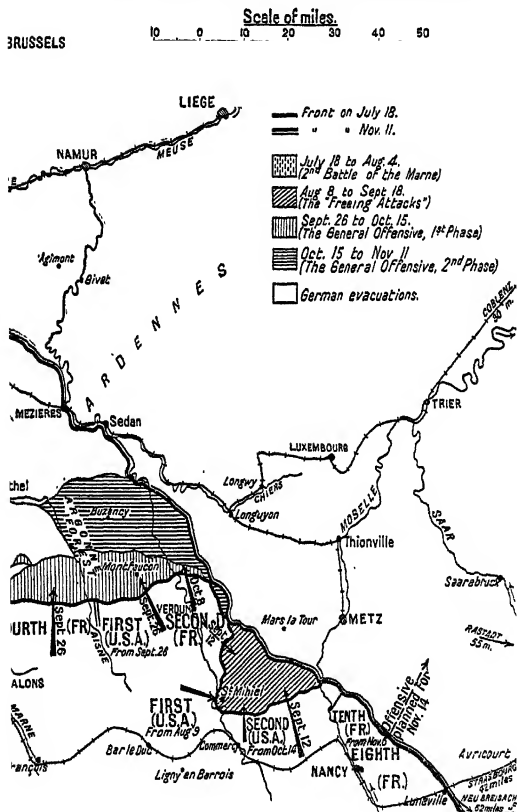
"EVERYONE is to attack (Belgians, British, French, and Americans) as soon as they can, as strong as they can, for as long as they can." That was the simple message, conveying Foch's intentions, which Du Cane brought to the British headquarters.

Such an assurance was the more welcome to Haig because on September 1st he had received a telegram from Wilson saying: "Just a word of caution in regard to incurring heavy losses in attack on Hindenburg Line, as opposed to losses when driving



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the enemy back to that line. I do not mean that you have incurred such losses, but I know that the War Cabinet would become anxious if we received heavy punishment in attacking the Hindenburg Line without success." Knowing that Wilson had earlier proposed his supersession, Haig read the telegram as a warning that he would be held responsible if the attack was a failure. It did not deter him from backing his belief and continuing his preparations to storm the Hindenburg Line. But he made the bitter comment: "What a lot of weaklings we have in London at the present time, and how ignorant they are of the first principles of war!" Just as was his confidence this time, he forgot that it had not always been justified—as the Government at home could not forget. Milner anxiously went out to France on a ten days' visit, and his impression is quoted in Wilson's diary on September 23rd, almost the eve of the offensive: "He thinks Haig ridiculously optimistic and is afraid that he may embark on another Passchendaele. He warned Haig that if he knocked his present army about there was no other to replace it. . . . The man-power is the trouble, and Douglas Haig and Foch . . . can't understand it."

This criticism seems to have been unjust. There is evidence that Haig now fully realised the danger of insolvency due to his drafts on the bank of man-power. But repayment would become due in 1919, and he felt that further expenditure now promised to avoid the need for repayment, whereas parsimony would give the Germans a chance to recover and prolong the struggle to 1919, when he might not have the resources to meet the demand.

His calculation was based not merely on the enemy's ebbing front and shrinking numbers, but on their moral decline. So was Foch's. Before framing his new offensive plan he had specially asked the Intelligence Service: "What's the moral state of those people?" The answer satisfied him.

Both he and Haig, who hoped "to be in Valenciennes in a few days," would find that they had still underestimated one material factor—the delaying power of even a thin chain of machine-guns. Happily for them this was offset by another material factor which Foch had underestimated—the naval

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blockade. If German morale was suffering under Foch's blows, it was suffering still more from, and was already undermined by, the now paralysing pressure of the blockade. As advance was slowing down, tired troops more readily lying down, and hopes dwindling in face of persistent machine-guns, revival would come by the loosening of the resistance from the rear. Letters from home, full of piteous tales of hunger and distress, would lie heavy on the empty stomach of the German soldier. The historic drama of the collapse of the Southern Confederacy and its determining cause would be re-enacted on a greater scale. But there would be one difference—a product of the difference between Lee and Ludendorff. For the German will to resist, though rotting internally, would still hold together until shattered by Ludendorff himself. The cracking of his nerve would cause the fatal spark which detonated the mine beneath the crumbling yet still unbroken fabric of Germany in arms.

The striking of the spark would coincide with the launching of Foch's great assault, yet this would not be the direct cause.

Foch defined the broad outline of his general offensive in a *directive* of September 3rd, the day after he had reached an agreement with Pershing. "The British Armies, supported by the left of the French Armies," were to "continue to attack in the general direction Cambrai—St. Quentin." "The centre of the French Armies" was "to continue its actions to throw the enemy back across the Aisne and the Ailette." The American Army, after carrying out its St. Mihiel operation, was to launch "an offensive in the general direction of Mézières, as strong and violent as possible, covered on the east by the Meuse and supported on its left by an attack of the [French] Fourth Army."

Foch sought to give a further extension to his offensive by mounting an attack in Flanders. Following up a letter of September 2nd, he drove north on the 9th to see King Albert and obtain his agreement. Then, at a conference with Haig and the Belgian Chief of Staff, it was arranged that the first bound of the offensive should be to an arc-like line from Clercken Ridge on the left, along Passchendaele Ridge and past Gheluvelt to the Ypres—Comines Canal. From this line the offensive would fork, one branch pushing on north to Bruges in order to free the

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Belgian coast, while the main branch veered eastward. The double operation would be carried out by the twelve divisions of the Belgian Army and six of Plumer's army, later reinforced by three French divisions. Command of the combined force was given to King Albert, but a French general would act as his Chief of Staff, and to this post Foch appointed Degoutte, whose "assistance" Pershing had so firmly refused.

Meantime, Rawlinson's and Byng's armies made a fresh attack on September 18th, which cleared the German advanced positions, captured a further 12,000 prisoners, and brought the British right wing within assaulting distance of the Hindenburg Line. As a personal contribution to the enemy's distraction Foch spent the next few days in a well-advertised tour of the eastern extremity of the front, in Lorraine and the Vosges. It also gave him the opportunity to arrange preparatory steps for later attacks there.

On his return to Bombon, he finally settled the time programme of his general offensive: on the 26th the Meuse-Argonne attack would open; next day the British First and Third Armies were to strike at the northern end of the Hindenburg Line preparatory to the main blow by the Fourth Army two days later; on the 28th the Flanders offensive was to begin, and also an attack by the French centre towards Aisne—the last would actually be two days late.

The uneven distribution of the German forces had a vital bearing on the prospects of these several strokes. On the eve of the offensive there were 12 divisions facing the 18 Allied divisions available for the Flanders offensive. Far heavier was the German concentration along the Hindenburg Line facing the armies of Byng and Rawlinson. On this sector the Germans had 57 divisions to resist 40 British and 2 American divisions. In contrast, there were only 20 divisions facing the armies of Pershing and Gouraud, which comprised 31 French divisions and 15 large American divisions—a total equivalent to at least 60 normal-size Allied divisions. It should be noted that the German divisions had shrunk to an abnormally small size, so that even the British attack on the Hindenburg Line had a superiority of numbers over the enemy, despite an inferiority in

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number of divisions. And in the zone occupied by Pershing and Gouraud the three to one superiority in divisions meant at least six to one in riflemen.

Thus the numerical odds were greatly in favour of the success of Foch's right pincer as compared with his left. Because of this difference Foch was wise in advancing his right pincer before his left. But it might have been wiser to have allowed a longer interval between the two attacks, for that in the Meuse-Argonne could scarcely take effect in time to draw off the German reserves before the attack on the Hindenburg Line was launched. And, in fact, it did not.

While the massing of the enemy's reserves opposite the left pincer made the British task all the more difficult, it was, however, an advantage to Foch's strategic design. For the enemy's consequent weakness in the Meuse-Argonne sector increased the chance of the stroke that was more potentially dangerous. To reach the lateral railway the American attack had a considerably shorter distance to travel than the British from the Cambrai-St. Quentin sector. And the Meuse end of that railway was the more vital because the nearest to Germany.

Foch's view was expressed in a note on the 25th: "The nature and importance of the operation undertaken for the 26th require that all its advantages be followed up without the slightest delay; that the breaking of the line of resistance be exploited uninterruptedly to as great a depth as possible. . . . This applies especially to the advance of the American Army. . . . As the strength of this army relieves it from all risks, it must, *without further instructions*, and upon the initiative of its commander, push its advance forward as far as possible. . . . Hence there must be no question of fixing limited objectives . . . not to be passed without fresh orders, as such restrictive instructions tend to prevent full exploitation of opportunities. . . ." Another indication of the special importance which Foch attached to this attack was that on the opening day he installed himself at a point close behind it, the Château de Trois-Fontaines north of St. Dizier.

Both in aim and in odds the Meuse-Argonne attack had a better prospect of decisive results than the Cambrai attack. And

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it is clear that Foch held this view. But the prospect became a mirage.

One drawback was inexperience. Others were less unavoidable. An excessive strain was put on a new organisation by the extreme haste of preparation. For the Americans had barely a week of real preparation on the spot, compared with the months which had preceded the French and British offensives of past years. Even the Germans had never mounted an attack so hurriedly. Yet in Pershing's plan the attacking troops were expected on the first day to reach and break through the rearward barrier formed by the Kriemhilde Line, a continuation of the Hindenburg Line. This would mean an advance of over eight miles. If so far-reaching a stride fulfilled the spirit of Foch's general instructions, Pershing's detailed instructions were less adapted to it—and less elastic. He certainly told his centre corps to push on to the Kriemhilde Line "without waiting for" its flanking neighbours. But these were told, in too indefinite words, that their advance was to be "based upon" the centre corps.

Pershing presumably calculated that his centre was likely to have an easier passage than his wings. The experience of all recent offensives was on his side. But this time the process, and degree of progress, would be reversed. The process had been true in cases of a real break-through, which here was not achieved.

The disadvantages of substituting the Meuse-Argonne for the St. Mihiel plan would early be felt. Haste of preparation was the first debit. A second was the compulsory use of raw divisions, the rawest of all being those placed in the centre. The toll was the higher because they had come to a region where nature handicapped inexperience. How different from the plain of the Woevre beyond St. Mihiel was the rough and wooded country of the Meuse-Argonne—a bad course over which to run a race against time. A third debit was the distance which separated the attackers from their main obstacle, the Kriemhilde Line. The handicap would be increased by the enemy's cunning.

At 5.30 a.m. on September 26th, after three hours' intense

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bombardment by 2,700 guns, nine American divisions advanced to the assault along a twenty-mile front. Six more were in corps and army reserve. It was a crushing weight to hurl on a line held by only five shrunken enemy divisions, averaging barely quarter the rifle strength of an American division. But crafty tactics helped to dam the flood and hold the danger at arm's length. The Germans had repeated the method of elastic defence—with the real resistance some miles in rear. The unexpectant Americans ran into this cunningly woven belt of fire when their momentum was lost—partly through the brake placed upon it by their own orders. Although the advance of the centre had come to an early stop on the slopes of Mont-faucon, the wings had pressed on, only to be halted on reaching the corps objectives. It was difficult to revive this momentum after six hours' delay, and in face of the enemy's well-posted machine-guns little further progress was achieved. Although the centre came up level with the wings next day, the great offensive had practically spent its force.

That day Foch tried to apply a stimulant in the form of a note which said: "The use of numerous machine-guns can undoubtedly retard or cover the enemy's retreat. But they do not suffice to create a solid defensive system. And, at all events, small units properly manœuvring can get the better of any such methods. This being the situation, our attacks must constantly seek to break through. For this purpose attacking groups (infantry and artillery) should be formed for advancing against objectives the capture of which will break down the enemy's front. . . . Once more the issue turns upon the activity of commanders and the endurance of the troops; the latter is never found wanting whenever an appeal is made to it."

But this appeal did not succeed in reviving the offensive, and on the third day six more German divisions began to arrive to cement the resistance. Many of the attacks were merely examples of vain gallantry, testifying once again to the folly of trying to overcome a "mowing machine-gun" defence by sheer weight of human bodies without the aid of surprise or adequate fire support. The 9,000 prisoners that had been taken were a small offset to the heavy cost, which was increased when, after

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reorganisation, a fresh general attack was launched on October 4th. If it made some progress on the left, it fell short of the Kriemhilde Line. The momentum of the French Fourth Army had been more sustained, but also more gradual, and it was still a step in rear of the American van.

* * * * *

Foch, meantime, had dashed off to Flanders on September 29th to apply a spur to the offensive there. This had opened well on the 28th, and by the 29th the desired arc of high ground had been gained—an advance of some eight miles—and nearly 10,000 prisoners had been captured. But while the troops had pushed forward successfully through a sea of mud, their transport sank in it, and the offensive had to be suspended for a fortnight, until the roads in rear were made passable.

A greater result, however, had been achieved further south. The Hindenburg Line had been breached. In the misty dawn of the 27th, after a heavy night bombardment along the whole front, Byng's left and Horne's right assaulted the Canal du Nord. Penetrating on a narrow sector, the assailants spread out fan-wise, and thus exerted a leverage which broke down the sides of the breach. On the evening of the 28th they had reached the suburbs of Cambrai. While this advance only brought them level with Rawlinson's waiting line, it had brought them past the northern edge of the Hindenburg Line, and so formed a leverage on that line. Meantime, on Rawlinson's front 1,600 guns, one gun to every three yards, had been smothering the defences for fifty-six hours—the first eight hours with gas. Thus the defenders were driven to take refuge in their deepest shelters.

Rawlinson's assault on the 29th was to be launched on a nine-mile front, one British (the 46th) and two American divisions (the 27th and 30th) forming its spearhead, while the flanks were covered by two more British divisions. The prospect seemed more favourable to the American divisions, for whereas the 46th on the right was faced by the deep chasm of the St. Quentin Canal, along the American front this canal passed through a tunnel. But the prospect was marred by a mishap. On September 27th, the 27th American Division had made a preliminary attack to clear three enemy advanced posts, and reported success.

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Then a doubt arose, and uncertainty reigned whether the posts were occupied by American parties or were still in German hands. The ill-consequence was that, on the 29th, the artillery put down the barrage half a mile in front of the infantry starting line. And in this fatal interval lay the posts, still with their German garrisons, waiting to mow down the American infantry.

When the assault was launched, the men of the 27th Division fell in swaths. And the collapse in death of their advance reacted on that of the 30th Division in the centre. Nevertheless, its men reached and breached the forward edge of the Hindenburg Line. But in their ardour they pushed on, instead of waiting for the Australians to pass through, and were taken in rear by Germans who emerged from dug-outs and from the canal tunnel. Thus the effort of the Australians was spent in breaking down afresh this intervening obstruction, instead of in exploiting the original break-through.

But the day was redeemed by the success of the 46th Division. Cloaked by the morning mist, its men had gained the canal and swarmed across it before the Germans realised the situation. Another division then leap-frogged them and carried the advance beyond the rear edge of the Hindenburg Line. The driving in of this deep wedge created a new leverage which helped the renewed Australian attack in widening the breach, and this leverage in turn was reinforced by pressure further north.

By October 5th the British had driven their way through the German defence system into open country, and had taken 36,000 prisoners. Mist and the method of leverage had been two of the chief factors in their success, which was also helped by the fact that the attack, in contrast to that in the Meuse-Argonne, had opened with the assailants close to the main barrier. The mist gave them the advantage of surprise in their assault on it.

Their success, however, had an ironical aspect. For they had broken the Hindenburg Line without any German divisions being drawn off by the Meuse-Argonne attack. Thus the result had justified Haig's confidence but not his precaution, proving that his troops could break through without indirect help to ease their path.

But the sequel proved a disappointment. The passing of the

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Hindenburg Line brought no marked acceleration of the advance, no sudden flooding of the open country beyond. Thirty miles still separated the British from Aulnoye junction at the western end of the lateral railway. Progress across this long stretch would be slow, if continuous. That progress, following on the breach of the Hindenburg Line, led the Germans to begin a general withdrawal of their line in the south near Reims, evacuating the nose of the great salient hitherto formed by their front in France. But the British progress was not sufficiently fast or dangerous to produce any general, or even local, collapse of the German front.

One cause was the wide area of reconquered and devastated country over which the British had now to haul their supplies. Another was that the British had largely spent their force in breaking the Hindenburg Line. And the strategic failure of the Meuse-Argonne attack deprived Foch of a counter-attraction that might have drawn off enemy reserves from before his left wing, and have eased its path at this moment of opportunity.

Here he paid a fresh penalty for changing the direction of the American offensive. While it is certain that the Meuse-Argonne attack did nothing to help the British break-through or subsequent pursuit, it is almost certain that a continuation of the St. Mihiel attack would have helped greatly. If the Americans had broken through the Michel Line the menace to Metz and the lateral railway would have been so close and of such far-reaching danger that Ludendorff could not have ignored it. He would have been forced to call away some of the German divisions along the Hindenburg Line. Thereby the British would have used up less effort in the break-through, and have been able to follow it up quicker. And the German Armies would have had less time to prepare their withdrawal, which might have become a disorganised reflux.

This chance was forfeited by the actual plan which Foch had adopted. And the prospect had faded by the end of the first week of October.

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Redemption came unexpectedly. Unknown to Foch, his offensive had proved more deadly in anticipation than in fulfil-

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ment. Its potential menace had been a decisive reinforcement to the moral impression made by an indirect stroke in a far-distant quarter. There he reaped the benefit of a diversion, a straying from the narrow path of orthodox theory, which had disgusted his friend Wilson.

Ten days before Foch's grand offensive in France an event had occurred in the Balkans that, in the words of Ludendorff, "sealed the fate of the Quadruple Alliance." Ludendorff had hoped to hold fast in his strong lines in France, falling back gradually to fresh lines if necessary, and with his strategic flanks covered, while the German Government was negotiating a favourable peace. But on September 15th the Allied army in Salonika attacked the Bulgarian front. Franchet d'Esperey had concentrated a Franco-Serb striking force, under Michich, on the Sokol-Dobropolye sector, where the Bulgarians, trusting to the strength of the mountains, had weakened their armed strength. While the British on the Doiran sector pinned a large part of the enemy reserves, Michich broke through and drove on towards Uskub. With their army split in two, the Bulgarians, already tired of the war, sought an armistice. Signed on September 29th, it not only severed the first root of the Quadruple Alliance, but opened the way to an advance on Austria's rear.

That same morning Rawlinson's blow fell on the Hindenburg Line. The early news was so disquieting as to offset the momentarily reassuring news from the Meuse-Argonne. In the afternoon Ludendorff, at Spa, studied the problem in his room at the Hotel Britannique—an ominously named choice of headquarters! Examination only seemed to make it more insoluble, and in a rising outburst of fear and passion he bemoaned his troubles and berated all those whom he regarded as having thwarted his efforts—the jealous staffs, the defeatist Reichstag, the too humanitarian Kaiser, and the submarine-obsessed Navy. Gradually he worked himself into a frenzy, until suddenly, with foam on his lips, he fell to the floor in a fit. And that evening it was a physically as well as morally shaken man who took the precipitate decision to appeal for an armistice, saying that the collapse of the Bulgarian front had upset all his dispositions: "troops destined for the Western Front had had to be

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dispatched there." This had "fundamentally changed the situation in view of the attacks then being launched on the Western Front," for although these "had so far been beaten off, their continuance must be counted on." Ludendorff had lost his nerve—only for a matter of days, but that was sufficient, and recovery too late.

Whatever faults may be found in Foch's judgment, it is certain that he would never have suffered a similar lapse. Even if his armies had melted in his hands, his will would still have been intact so long as he had life in his body.

At this crisis Prince Max of Baden was summoned to be Chancellor, and to use his pacific reputation as a pledge of honour in negotiating peace. To bargain effectively and without open confession of defeat he asked and needed a breathing space of "ten, eight, even four days before I have to appeal to the enemy." But Hindenburg merely reiterated that "the gravity of the military situation admits of no delay," and insisted that "a peace offer to our enemies be issued at once," while Ludendorff plaintively chanted the refrain, "I want to save my army."

Hence on October 3rd the appeal for an immediate armistice went out to President Wilson. It was a confession to the world—and to the German people themselves—of defeat. Men who had so long been kept in the dark were blinded by the sudden light. All the forces of discord and defeatism received an immense impulse.

Within a few days the German command became more cheerful, even optimistic, when it saw that the breach of the Hindenburg Line had not been followed by a break in the human fighting line. More encouragement came from reports of a slackening in the Allied pressure. Ludendorff still wanted an armistice, but only to rest his troops as a prelude to further resistance and to ensure a secure withdrawal to a shortened defensive line on the frontier. By October 17th he even felt he could ensure this without a rest. But his first impression, and depression, had now spread throughout Germany as the ripples spread when a pebble has been dropped in a pool. Foch's old parable had a new meaning.

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The German appeal of October 3rd was a tonic to Foch. He needed it. For although his faith never faltered, the month of October was a time of trial and strain—trial in front and strain from the rear. In striving to revive his own military pressure on the Germans, he suffered from both resistance and pressure in conference. And the former he found the less uncomfortable of the two.

On October 1st Foch, on return to Bombon from his visit to Flanders, had discussed with Pétain how to give a new impetus to the Meuse-Argonne attack. Foch considered that Pershing's remedy of pushing in more divisions "only intensified the difficulties, and resulted in a complete blocking of his rear and the bottling up of his communications." He arranged with Pétain to extend the attack to the east bank of the Meuse, and to withdraw part of the American divisions in "the narrow corridor between the Meuse and the Argonne," distributing them east of the Meuse and west of the Argonne. To save time, if also to extend French control, they would be incorporated in French army corps. Further, while Pershing's sphere of command would be side-slipped eastward astride the Meuse, a new French army commander would assume charge of the Franco-American forces on either side of the Argonne Forest. It was an apt design, and sound from a purely strategic point of view.

But when Weygand carried it to Pershing he abruptly rejected it, seeing it as a fresh political manoeuvre to curb American independence. He was willing to extend the attack east of the Meuse—under his own command. Foch once more gave way, merely making the stipulation that "the American attack should be resumed, and, once started, continued without pause. . . ."

He did not hide his disappointment with the Meuse-Argonne offensive and its results: "inferior to what was permissible to expect against an adversary assailed everywhere and resisting at certain points with only worn-out, heterogeneous and hastily assembled troops, and in a region where his defensive positions had already been captured." He complained that those in command did not seem "to push it personally with full energy, themselves supervising the execution of their orders." It was easier for him to apply a spur to the French, and he asked

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Pétain to give his army commanders the keynote: "Inspire, give a lead, be watchful, supervise!" Gouraud was instructed to "march straight on the Aisne in the direction of Rethel"; Berthelot to push towards the Aisne north of Reims in order to aid Mangin's movement on Laon. But the Germans had already begun to withdraw on this front, and the French centre did little to hasten their retirement, almost the only "kick" having been a small one north-west of Reims by Berthelot on September 30th. This yielded 2,000 prisoners. The French centre did not again make serious contact with the enemy until on October 15th it found the enemy in position on a flattened line through Rethel to La Fère. With perhaps too acute strategic sense the French commanders appreciated that decisive results depended on the rapid advance of the pincers on either flank, and so were content to threaten the enemy's centre by their pressure without unduly expediting his retreat. This restraint certainly lightened the strain on their own men, weary from four years of war, but it also reduced the strain which the enemy, engaged in holding back the pincers, had to bear. A more uniform pressure would have better suited Foch's taste. For in him there was at least one unwearied Frenchman.

His relations with the British were now his lightest strain. This was natural, for their recent achievement fitted his mood; and when their advance lost momentum he felt that comparison prevented any complaint. His chief anxiety over the British was that they should keep up their man-power. Wilson met him the day after the breach of the Hindenburg Line. "He is looking very well and, of course, mightily pleased with everything. He insisted again upon our keeping up sixty-one divisions, building less ships, less aeroplanes, less tanks, etc. The same story." And at a conference at Versailles on October 7th Foch protested against any reduction in the number of divisions. Wilson's diary has the caustic note: "Nothing, of course, settled. Lloyd George asked for Foch's photograph, so all went well." Although now hoping for victory in 1918, Foch was still thinking of a 1919 campaign. He considered that the British Government was "inclined to give aviation and tanks a perhaps exaggerated importance."

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It is interesting to note this continued faith in man-power as compared with machine-power, the more curious because he owed the great successes of July 18th and August 8th largely to the tanks, and the failure of September partly to an inadequacy of tanks—as Pershing's report was to point out. Again it was to the ceaseless air offensive on the German rest billets and on the munition centres in the Rhineland that Foch in part owed the diminution of the enemy's ammunition supply and the accelerated decline of German morale, both at the front and at home. But not until after the war did Foch reveal a new appreciation of the potency of air attack.

In contrast, the collapse of Bulgaria had enlarged Foch's strategic horizon, bringing him to realise more fully the value of the indirect approach. He was eager that the Bulgarian success should be developed by an advance up the Danube against Austria's rear, in conjunction with the Rumanians. He urged Wilson to reinforce the Salonika army, and to instruct its commander, Milne, to join in the Danube advance. Wilson, however, as well as Lloyd George, held that an attempt should first be made to knock out Turkey and open the Dardanelles.

This possibility had just been enhanced by Allenby's great coup in Palestine, delivered on September 19th, which had not merely defeated, but rounded up the Turkish Army. Foch delightedly declared that this was "*très chic*," but he was "entirely opposed" to any detachments from the Salonika army to exploit the success by a move on Constantinople. He favoured the idea of "isolating" Turkey, by occupying strategic points in Bulgaria, so as to cover the rear of the advance up the Danube. He gave way a little when the importance of controlling the Black Sea and the entrance to the Danube was pointed out to him, and refrained from further opposition, contenting himself with the private comment that the "expedition against Constantinople had every chance of ending in failure," and that Milne was likely to take "a hard knock." In the outcome Milne was given the mission of moving on Constantinople, while Franchet d'Esperey advanced up the Danube.

Foch's divergence of opinion from Clemenceau on this point was symptomatic. A greater discord was developing over the

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question of the American offensive in France. Clemenceau had visited Foch and bitterly remarked: "Those Americans will lose us our chance of a big victory before winter. They are all tangled up with themselves." Clemenceau complained that Foch did not "know how to enforce his will," and showed increasing impatience. "You will have to answer to France for it."

Foch, much goaded, took the counter-offensive against Clemenceau with the remark: "You realise that, constitutionally, I am not under your orders." Clemenceau acidly replied: "I have much good will for you, but, if I have any advice to give you, it is not to try that game." Foch's claim to independence was no more fortunate than his attempt in the spring to overrule Haig's claim to independence of himself. It gave Clemenceau the impression that Foch was suffering from "swelled head," "blinded by the smoke of incense," and that he was an undisciplined soldier ready to sacrifice his duty to the pursuit of his personal advantage. Worse still, Clemenceau acquired a fixed idea that Foch was a second Boulanger, threatening the civil power. He might, more aptly, have remarked that Foch had just reached his sixty-seventh birthday.

With every day's apparent delay on the Meuse-Argonne front, Clemenceau's resentment grew. At last, on the 11th, he decided to abandon his "persuasive manner"—as he termed it! He went to the Elysée to show the President the draft of a letter he proposed to send Foch "in order to bring about a decision concerning the inaction of the American troops." After reading the letter, Poincaré formally advised Clemenceau not to send it: "If that letter is sent its contents will become known to the Marshal's *entourage*, and without a doubt to Pershing's also. It may cause serious friction: In any case, I think that some of the phrases ought to be toned down."

Clemenceau yielded so far as to modify the language of the letter, and then sent it back next day to Poincaré. But the President considered that it was "still too harsh with regard both to the Americans and to Foch," and that it might "provoke the Marshal's resignation." Clemenceau, for example, had said: "It is our country's command that you shall command." Poincaré remarked: "If that was said to me I should resign." He

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added: "Is it Monsieur Clemenceau's business to concern himself with what Marshal Foch does as Commander-in-Chief of the American Army? In that capacity is not Marshal Foch responsible rather to the American Government?" The letter concluded with a plea for patience, saying: "If at the end of a few weeks things are unchanged we could then have resource to extreme measures, but as there is a possibility that with rather thin-skinned foreigners such measures might spoil everything, we must, in my opinion, have recourse to them only if the situation became really desperate."

On October 14th Clemenceau came back from a visit to the front, and when told of this letter by the Under-Secretary of State he was so furious at the rebuke that he refused to read the letter, jumping to the conclusion that Poincaré and Foch were in league against him. But he at least postponed the dispatch of the letter. He seems to have been a little soothed by a verbal message from Foch saying that he had "just been to see Pershing and had demanded *results*."

But after a week had passed Clemenceau felt that he had waited long enough for these promised results. And he had two new causes for irritation. The first was that Foch had forbidden Pétain to send him a report on the American Army which concluded with the verdict: "If General Pershing perseveres in his present line of conduct, it can only end in disaster." The second arose out of a request which Haig had made for two new American divisions to reinforce his advances. Finding that Foch hesitated to tackle Pershing and daily put him off with excuses, Haig appealed to Clemenceau, who sent Mordacq to urge the matter with Foch. Foch merely replied that "he was going to study the question but saw certain difficulties in its solution." So on the 21st Clemenceau launched his letter.

"I have postponed from day to day writing you about the crisis existing in the American Army. . . . You have watched at close quarters the development of General Pershing's exactions. Unfortunately, thanks to his invincible obstinacy, he has won out against you as well as against your immediate subordinates. To go over all this again can only lead to useless regrets. . . . What matters is the immense battle now going on,

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a battle which you have conducted in such a way as to place you in the front rank of great captains. . . . Constitutionally, I am the head of the French Army. . . . I would be a criminal if I allowed the French Army to wear itself out indefinitely in battle, without doing everything in my power to ensure that an Allied Army which has hurried to its aid was rendered capable of fulfilling the military rôle for which it is destined.

"The French Army and the British Army, without a moment's respite, have been daily fighting, for the last three months, battles which are using them up at a time when it is impossible for us to reinforce them immediately with fresh effectives. These two armies are pressing back the enemy with an ardour that excites world-wide admiration; but our worthy American Allies, who thirst to get into action and who are unanimously acknowledged to be great soldiers, have been marking time ever since their forward jump on the first day. . . . Nobody can maintain that these fine troops are unusable; they are merely unused.

"One does not have to be a technician to understand that the immobility of your right wing cannot possibly be part of your plan. . . . I am aware of all the efforts you have made to overcome the resistance of General Pershing; indeed, it is because you have omitted nothing in the way of persuasion that I cannot shirk the duty of asking myself whether . . . the time has not come for changing methods. . . . If General Pershing finally resigns himself to obedience, if he accepts the advice of the capable generals whose presence at his side he has hitherto permitted only that he might reject their counsels, I shall be wholly delighted. But if this new attempt to reconcile two contrary points of view should not bring the advantageous results you anticipate, I must say to you that, in my opinion, any further hesitation should be out of the question. For it would then be certainly high time to tell President Wilson the truth, and the whole truth, concerning the state of the American troops. . . ."

Foch abstained from any direct discussion of this point. "For," he said later, "what is the good of giving orders, when for many moral and concrete reasons they cannot be executed? We have to treat men, and especially men of a different nation, according to what they are, and not according to what we should like them to be. I therefore continued my method of patience and persuasion, as opposed to severity and restraint." "The letter of M. Clemenceau, pressing as it was, did not make me

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vary my course by a hair's-breadth. I took absolutely no notice of it whatever."

Foch considered that an appeal to Wilson for Pershing's recall might not succeed, and if it did not, Pershing "would know what had occurred and be still more restive. Even assuming that he was recalled, his successor would need a long time to gather up the threads."

Foch therefore sent Clemenceau a bare and businesslike reply, beginning with a table which showed that of the 30 American divisions "fit for battle" 8 were with the French, 2 with the British, and 20 "under Pershing's orders, constituting the self-contained American Army. I count upon maintaining these categories. . . . I also contemplate varying the proportion between the two according to circumstances, increasing the ten and diminishing the twenty, whenever operations being prepared permit it. It is by manipulation of this sort that I expect to diminish the weaknesses of the High Command, rather than by orders." He concluded by pointing out that the "crisis is the sort from which all improvised armies suffer," and by dwelling on the "magnitude" of the American effort. "From September 26th to October 20th its losses in battle were 54,158 men—in exchange for small gains on a narrow front, it is true, but over particularly difficult country and in the face of serious resistance."

Foch's explanation as to his proposed method is characteristic and significant. But it is a question whether consistent candour might not have been more profitable, in view of Pershing's well-founded suspicion that this "manipulation" was being practised. Constant suspicion of the motive underlying all proposals led to their consistent obstruction.

* * * * *

On October 7th the offensive had been extended east of the Meuse, but after a short advance the French corps that delivered it met a line of defence which completely stopped it. That same day Pershing's left drove in a new wedge which persuaded the enemy to release their hold on the northern border of the Argonne Forest. This and other small gains encouraged Pershing to launch a new general offensive on the 14th. But

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although it gained a footing on the Kriemhilde heights it failed to break through. Pershing now realised that the offensive had reached stalemate, and made a lengthy halt while he reorganised his army, replenished its supplies, and improved its communications. He also transferred to Liggett the First American Army west of the Meuse, and formed the inactive forces east of the Meuse into a Second Army under Bullard. One advantage of this change was, in Pershing's view, that it gave him the status of an Army Group Commander; and he promptly demanded that he should receive instructions direct from Foch instead of through Pétain. This was conceded; indeed, Pétain had already suggested it as a possible easement to friction.

On October 21st Foch issued a *directive* for the renewed offensive, which would be helped by the fact that Gouraud's Fourth Army, following up the German withdrawal, was now for the first time ahead of Pershing's, thus exerting a leverage on the flank of the latter's opponents. Foch insisted that the offensive should be ready without fail by November 1st. "The general aim . . . is to reach the region of Buzancy (for the American First Army), Le Chesne for the French Fourth Army, in order to liberate the line of the Aisne from the east." As Buzancy had been intended in the original plan to be reached during the night of September 27th, this was a very modest aim.

This limited aim, coupled with the fact that on October 18th he had moved his own headquarters from Bombon to Senlis, seems to show that Foch now pinned his hopes to the advance of his western pincer. Indeed, ten days earlier he had written that, of his three offensives, "the one most advantageous to exploit—thanks to the success obtained by the British armies—is that of Solesmes-Wassigny" (*i.e.* towards Maubeuge). He directed that the British should swing in a north-easterly direction, and to help their push he pressed Degoutte to resume the offensive in Flanders, reinforcing this with two American and two more French divisions.

On October 14th the attack was launched and the enemy gave way rapidly, evacuating the Belgian coast and swinging back their right to a line covering Ghent. On their left, too, they were compelled to give up Lille, which was occupied by the

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British on the 17th. That same day Haig's attack at Le Cateau forced the passage of the Selle and thereby made a breach in the third and last of the withdrawal positions which Ludendorff had originally prepared. To the eastwards this position ran along the southern edge of the Ardennes, covering Mézières and Sedan, so that Foch's right pincer was still a long way from it.

The hopes based on the fresh thrust of this left pincer soon faded, however, and although another 21,000 prisoners had been taken, its advance became too gradual for decisive effect. If German machine-gun rearguards imposed a brake, an even stronger brake was applied by the destruction of roads and railways, which made it impossible for supplies and ammunition to reach the advancing troops. There was more faith than immediate hope in Foch's *directive* of October 19th, which said that "the Flanders Group of Armies will march in the general direction of Brussels. . . . The British armies will advance south of the line Pecq-Lessines-Hal, their right marching . . . upon Agimont, north of Givet. The mission of the British armies continues to be to throw the enemy back upon the almost impenetrable *massif* of the Ardennes at the point where this obstacle cuts his main lateral railway." This description exaggerated the impassibility of the Ardennes, which were traversed by numerous roads and several railways. To close the flanking routes would complicate the German withdrawal, but only if they were closed very rapidly—as always in war, everything turned on the time factor. And the lateral railway was shrinking in importance with every day's progress in the German withdrawal. Foch's converging pincers would lose their point when no salient was left to pinch.

* * * * *

His own mind, indeed, was now turning to an alternative, or, at least, a variant. On October 9th a note from Pétain's Intelligence branch had pointed out that 150 out of the 187 German divisions were placed between the Meuse and the sea. The enemy "can only change this proportion very slowly (by railway a division a day). He will thus be in a very difficult situation . . . if faced with a French attack in Lorraine."

But not until the 20th did Foch definitely react to this sug-

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gestion by instructions to Pétain which said: "The operations now under way are intended to throw the enemy back on the Meuse. . . . To overcome his resistance on this river, by turning the position, attacks should be prepared west and east of the Moselle, moving in the general direction of Longwy-Luxembourg on one side, and of the Sarre on the other. The chance of a rapid success of these attacks will be in proportion to the promptness with which they are made. . . . Their chances are also increased by the fact that the enemy will soon be deprived of his principal lateral railway from Mézières to Sedan. Therefore it would be well to utilise French troops released by the shortening of our line. . . ."

Pétain submitted his proposals the next day. To Foch they seemed to have the "drawback of making a sufficiently rapid execution difficult," especially in the sector between the Meuse and Moselle. Hence Foch decided to postpone the attack towards Luxembourg, and asked Pétain to prepare the other, a thrust from the Nancy sector across the German frontier towards Sarrebruck. Thus Foch at the close of the war was planning to repeat, under more favourable circumstances, the thrust with which he had begun the war. . . . When first delivered, it had been too early. It would now be too late.

Foch left Senlis for Flanders on the 21st, and it was not until the 25th that Pétain was able to discuss the plan with him. Pétain reported that the attack could be ready about November 15th, and explained from what sources he expected to draw the troops required. In addition to Gérard's army, at present holding the sector, Mangin's army would be transferred from the French centre and inserted between Gérard and the Second American Army. On the 27th Pétain issued instructions to Castelnau, the Army Group Commander. He decided that the larger proportion of the strength available should be given to Mangin, so that he might have the means not only to cover his flank towards Metz but also to exploit success along the more promising line. Pétain had also asked for ten or twelve American divisions, but Foch shrank from such a demand, fearing Pershing's opposition. He told Pétain: "There is an obvious interest in beginning the Lorraine offensive as soon as possible, as

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the size of the force is less important than the moment chosen for action.

Quickness, however, was sacrificed. If the cause lay partly in Foch's prolonged pursuit of his original direction, it was not the only cause. Each headquarters concerned drew up lengthy and detailed schemes, then debated them and wrote fresh ones. These delays may have been due to the grip of trench-warfare habit—but may also have been due to a reluctance to move without the assurance of American help. And it was not until November 6th, when the renewed American offensive west of the Meuse had fulfilled its purpose, that Foch put his request to Pershing—for six divisions. Even then he met such reluctance that, a few days later, he was fain to write Pershing: "I will give orders to have them early replaced under American command. It is a case before everything else of moving quickly. That is why I again insist." Pershing then conceded Foch's demand, but on the condition that the divisions should be under Bullard's command. They began to move on the morning of November 11th.

Thus, at the last hour of the war, a force of 22 French and 6 American divisions, supported by a large mass of artillery and 600 tanks, was assembling—for an hour that would never strike. While the enemy's capitulation was the event that forestalled it, its promise was also partly forestalled by allowing the enemy time to complete his great withdrawal west of the Meuse and to prepare the evacuation of Metz. If the stroke had been ready at the end of October, as was practicable, it would certainly have caused the enemy more injury than those that were actually renewed at that time. For there was then little point in a continuation of the general convergence on Mézières.

On November 1st, however, Liggett launched the renewed American blow in the Meuse-Argonne, driving a deep wedge through the Germans' newly improvised defences, and using this as leverage, in conjunction with Gouraud, to loosen the enemy's resistance along his whole front. After a vain effort to check his progress, the Germans fell back to the Meuse, pivoting on their left and covered by rearguards. The attack in Flanders

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had been resumed on October 31st, but, after forcing the enemy back to Ghent, was brought to a halt along the line of the Scheldt. Thereupon Foch decided that the obstacle could best be overcome by turning it from the south. Accordingly, Haig renewed his attack on November 4th, forcing the Sambre and Oise Canal.¹ Next day the Germans began a fresh and far-reaching withdrawal along the whole front between Condé and Rethel, giving up Aulnoye junction and Maubeuge. But they were falling back faster than they could be followed. A pause must come while the communications across the devastated area were being repaired, and thus the Germans would have breathing space to rally their resistance. The Franco-British advance was to reach the line Sedan-Mézières-Mons by November 11th—the line of the opening clash in 1914—but strategically it had come to a standstill.

The Germans' more susceptible front was now north of Verdun. On November 7th the Americans reached the Meuse near Sedan, attaining their long-sought goal of cutting the lateral railway. For four years that railway had been the Germans' lifeline. But when it was cut it had ceased to be their lifeline. The real menace to them was not in this direction or in this achievement. It lay in the fact that Liggett had begun a wheel to the east, towards Longuyon. In conjunction with Bullard he was preparing to attack the strong position, between the Meuse and the Chiers, to which the enemy had withdrawn. If this was lost it would be impossible to hold the Antwerp—

¹ The material effect exerted by Foch's right and left pincers respectively can be gauged from the captures. Between September 26th and November 11th the American offensive in the Meuse-Argonne (right pincer) took 26,000 prisoners and 847 guns; the British offensive towards Maubeuge (left pincer) took 88,500 prisoners and 1,540 guns. This figure excludes the Flanders offensive.

Over the whole period of the Allied offensive campaign from July 18th to November 11th the captures were:

British Army	..	188,700 prisoners	2,840 guns
French Army	..	139,000	1,880 "
American Army	..	48,800	1,424 "
Belgian Army	..	14,500	474 "

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Meuse line, and the Rhine would have to be the next line of resistance. Hence the German command was specially sensitive to the threat.

But there were now new and worse dangers developing elsewhere. Germany had lost her remaining partners. Defenceless Turkey, menaced by Milne's advance on Constantinople, had capitulated on October 30th. That same day the Austrians besought an armistice. Three days earlier the Italians had launched their long-promised offensive, after the crossings of the Piave had been forced, and the Austrian Army was split asunder, collapsing in rout. These disasters had a prompt reaction on Germany.

Already, on October 23rd, President Wilson had replied to the German appeal with a note that virtually required an unconditional surrender. Ludendorff had wished to carry on the struggle in the hope that a successful defence of the frontier might damp the Allies' determination. But the situation had passed beyond his control, the nation's will-power was broken, and his advice was in discredit. On the 26th he had been forced to resign.

Then, for thirty-six hours, the Chancellor lay in coma from an overdose of sleeping-draught after influenza. When he returned to his desk on November 3rd, not only Turkey but Austria also had capitulated. If the situation on the Western Front was felt to be rather easier, Austrian territory and railways were now available as a base of operations against Germany's back door. Next day revolution broke out, and spread swiftly over the country, fanned by the Kaiser's reluctance to abdicate. The German Fleet mutinied when their commanders sought to send them out on a forlorn attack on the British Navy. But in these last days of terrible and diverse strain the reddening glare in Germany was accentuated by the looming clouds over the Lorraine and Austrian frontiers. On November 6th the German delegates left Berlin to treat for an armistice.

The news was a fresh spur to Foch in spurring on his subordinates, in order that unremitting pressure along the front might reinforce the leverage on the German Government's will.

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Pétain responded by antedating the Lorraine offensive by one day—to the 14th. It is unlikely that this would have proved an exception to the “wave theory,” and have solved the hitherto insoluble problem of maintaining the initial momentum of advance after a break-through.

Foch did not think so. According to his *Memoirs*, he expected merely the “rapid conquest of a dozen or so miles. After this it would undoubtedly encounter devastations such as were already retarding elsewhere the progress of the other armies.” “It would add its impulse to theirs, amplify them, reinforce their effect, without changing their nature.”

It is certain that when asked (on October 29th) how long it would take to drive the Germans back across the Rhine, if they refused the Armistice terms, he replied: “Maybe three, maybe four or five months. Who knows?” And his post-war comment on this Lorraine thrust was: “Its importance has always been exaggerated. It is regarded as the irresistible blow that was to fall and administer the knock-out to the Boche. That’s nonsense. The Lorraine offensive was *not* in itself any more important than the attack then being prepared in Belgium.” Its value lay in exploiting “a new direction where there was no possibility of encountering strong enemy forces,” and in widening the offensive frontage. How greatly had experience modified Foch’s conception of victory as the product of “one supreme stroke on one point”!

More significantly strategically was the plan which he submitted to the Supreme War Council on November 3rd in view of Austria’s surrender, to prepare a concentric advance on Munich by three Allied armies, which would be assembled on the Austro-German frontier within five weeks. Another, and even earlier, new menace to Germany’s “rear” was being prepared. For Trenchard’s Independent Air Force was about to extend its range and bomb Berlin on a scale hitherto unattempted in air warfare.

The internal situation and the obvious external developments in prospect were the factors which clinched Germany’s decision to capitulate—not the hypothetical effect of any single blow uncertainly surmised by her. With starvation and revolution at

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home, a coming menace to their southern frontier and a continued strain on their western, the German delegates would have no option but to accept the drastic terms of the Armistice which were presented to them by Foch. At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month a strange hush settled on the battle front—the war was over.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TRIUMPH OF THE VOCAL WILL

ON October 5th Germany's armistice appeal to President Wilson had become known in France. Foch was delighted, and told Frazier, the American diplomat: "We are on the slope of victory, and victory has sometimes a way of galloping." That same day he set to work on the congenial task of drawing up a summary of the conditions that he considered essential. On the 8th he sent the summary to Clemenceau. Its first point was the evacuation within fifteen days of all invaded territory still occupied by the enemy. This corresponded with the basic condition indicated in President Wilson's preliminary reply to the German appeal. Foch's second point went much further. To assure a good "base of departure" for a new offensive if negotiations failed, the Allies should occupy three bridgeheads across the upper Rhine, at Strasbourg, Rastadt, and Neu-Brisach. Thirdly, the German territory west of the Rhine should be occupied as security for reparations. All railway material and military buildings must be left intact, and any war material that the Germans could not remove within a month must also be left.

The following afternoon Foch expounded his views to a meeting of the representatives of the Allied Governments, and he was instructed to work out his conditions in detail. On the 12th the German Chancellor seized upon President Wilson's tentative answer to declare his readiness "to conclude an armis-

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tice in conformity with the evacuation proposals presented by the President." This manœuvre was foiled by President Wilson's firm answer that the conditions of an armistice "must be left to the judgment and advice" of the Allies' "military counsellors," and that "no arrangement could be accepted by the Government of the United States which did not secure, by means of absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees, the maintenance of the present superiority of the Allied armies . . . on the battlefield." Colonel House at once sailed for Europe as his representative.

On the 16th Foch addressed a long letter to Clemenceau in which he pointed out that, while his first two conditions had been based on "military requirements," the third was devised as a guarantee "for obtaining reparation for damage done in Allied countries." He then significantly asked: "After reparations have been paid what is to be the fate of those territories? Are we to continue in occupation? Are we going to annex a part of the country, or to favour the creation of neutral, autonomous, or independent states, so forming a buffer?" Here we see the germ of what was to become Foch's ruling idea—that of a neutral Rhineland, as a buffer state.

"These are questions about which it is important that the military commander whose duty it will be to sign the Armistice, and discuss its terms when a request for it has been presented, should be informed. . . . For it is certain that the Armistice should give us full guarantees for obtaining, in the course of the peace negotiations, the terms that we wish to impose on the enemy; . . . that only the sacrifices of territory agreed to by the enemy at the time of signing the Armistice will remain final." This sentence suffices in itself to contradict the picture often painted of Foch as a simple-minded soldier, suited to the battlefield but without capacity for the affairs of state. It reveals once again a Foch who was most a realist when he was furthest from the battlefield, who could display the reasoning and the realism of a Machiavelli when he was dealing with human relations, of which one aspect is termed politics.

Foch's letter led up to the conclusion that it was indispensable for him to know the ulterior intentions of the Allied Govern-

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ments as a foundation on which to build and expand his Armistice conditions. And for the purpose he asked to "be placed in close and continuous touch with some prominent member of the Foreign Office." The suggestion showed Foch's appreciation of the truth that strategy is dependent upon policy, and should be closely regulated by it.

But Clemenceau viewed it with suspicion—he seems to have thought that Foch was attempting to gain a foothold that would give him a leverage upon policy. Clemenceau did not send a reply until a week later, and then began it with the specific statement that Foch was only the military adviser of the Government, and that even in this technical sphere the Government was free to reject or modify his advice. Diplomatic and political discussions bearing on the question of progress and the disposal of the Rhineland were outside his province. Clemenceau intimated that Foch would be kept informed of such discussions only in so far as they had a military bearing. And to reinforce his rebuke he enclosed a letter from the Foreign Minister, Pichon, who peremptorily refused Foch's request to be put in touch with some high official, saying: "Only the Minister himself can give you such information." He added: "Each man to his own profession. It is advisable that the scope of each be clearly defined, so as to avoid any confusion of powers."

Foch's later comment on these letters was: "I had no need of such a pedantic lecture on constitutional law and the limitation of power—especially pedantic on the part of the Quai d'Orsay. I had simply taken my stand on the level ground of reason and common sense. Peace is the logical finish of a war, and as it was close upon us, I wanted to know the Government's policy on the vital question of the Rhine, so as to turn my own steps in the same direction. That was all. As for the notion so vociferously proclaimed by M. Pichon and M. Clemenceau, that a general works on one side of a barrier and the politicians and diplomats on the other, there is nothing more false, or one can even say, more absurd. War is not a dual object, but a unity; so, for that matter, is peace. . . . The two aspects are clearly and inseparably linked."

The rebuke did not deter Foch from pursuing his Rhineland

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goal. "You must strike while the iron is hot. If France intended to separate the Rhineland from Prussia, there was no time to be lost in shaping the Armistice accordingly." It is noteworthy that Foch now extended his draft conditions to include the occupation of the main crossings of the lower Rhine. If these would provide a jumping-off line for a march on Berlin they would also close the arteries of communication between Berlin and the Rhineland.

Foch's next tussle was to be with the British. This time he won. And the effect of the first controversy is to be traced in his treatment of the second. He had learnt that Haig considered his armistice conditions too drastic, and likely to provoke a refusal. He also learnt that Haig had left Montreuil for London on the 18th, and he suspected, rightly, that Haig was going to lay his views and his protest before the British Government. Hence Foch had at once written to warn Clemenceau and urge him to stand firm. But Clemenceau's treatment of his other request now led Foch to seek a new ally in Poincaré, to reinforce his claim that the Rhine must be made an essential condition. "An armistice without the Rhine, and I should not sleep a single night. Do you wish to kill me?" He was soon reassured.

On the 24th Foch and Pétain had a long interview with Clemenceau, who approved Foch's conditions with certain additions suggested by Pétain and Mordacq. Next day Foch met the several Commanders-in-Chief to discuss his draft terms.

Haig considered the terms too severe and urged moderation: "The victorious Allied armies are extenuated. The units need to be reorganised. Germany is not broken in a military sense. During the last weeks her armies have withdrawn fighting very bravely and in excellent order. Therefore if it is really desired to conclude an armistice"—and this he thought very desirable—"it is necessary to grant Germany conditions which she can accept. That is to say, the evacuation of the invaded territory in France and Belgium as well as Alsace-Lorraine, and the restitution of the rolling stock taken at the beginning of the war from the French and Belgians. If more is demanded, there is

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a risk of prolonging the war, which has already cost so much, and of exasperating German national feeling, with very doubtful results. For the evacuation of all invaded territories and of Alsace-Lorraine is sufficient to seal the victory." Foch interjected: "It cannot be said that the German Army is not defeated. . . . Certainly the Allied armies are not new, but victorious armies are never fresh . . . and nothing gives wings to an army like victory."

Pétain then gave his opinion, declaring that two things were essential. The first was that "the German Army should return to Germany without a gun or a tank, and with only its portable arms." He suggested that by specifying a brief time-limit the enemy could be prevented from removing his war material. Secondly, the Allies must occupy a zone on the east bank of the Rhine. But he added that "although these conditions are indispensable, it is hardly to be expected that the Germans will accept them." Pershing's suggested conditions agreed with those of Pétain.

Foch did not argue Haig's points. Instead, he disregarded them in the draft which he took to Clemenceau next day. He again told Clemenceau that Haig's conditions were insufficient as they would allow the enemy to renew a defensive war inside their own frontier under favourable circumstances. On the other hand, he considered that Pétain's conditions demanded more than was necessary to fulfil the purpose of rendering Germany powerless. His own terms included the "immediate evacuation of invaded territory" to be carried out by successive stages, the last to be completed within fourteen days; during this process the enemy must abandon a minimum of 5,000 guns and 30,000 machine-guns—forming respectively a third and a half of their total armament as estimated by him. Secondly, the enemy's army must evacuate all German territory west of the Rhine, and the Allied armies should occupy the "principal crossings of the Rhine (Mayence, Coblenz, Cologne, Strasbourg) with bridgeheads at these points of thirty-kilometre radius on the right bank." Further, along the whole eastern bank, a strip forty kilometres wide should become a neutral zone. The enemy must also hand over 5,000 locomotives and 150,000

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railway wagons. The blockade should be maintained until all these conditions were fulfilled.

Foch's memorandum concluded with a statement of the naval conditions that appeared to him "necessary and sufficient." The enemy should hand over 150 submarines, and withdraw his surface fleet to the Baltic ports, the Allies occupying the port of Cuxhaven and the island of Heligoland. The enemy should also indicate the positions of all his minefields "except those moored in his own territorial waters."

Foch assured Clemenceau, and Clemenceau that evening assured House, that Germany was so thoroughly beaten that she would accept any terms offered. At that date it was a bold prediction and unjustified by the enemy's state at the moment. Austria and Turkey had not yet abandoned their partner; and, above all, revolution had not yet broken out in Germany. Haig's conditions accorded more closely with what we now know of the mood of the German leaders. Haig had become a realist; Foch was a man of faith. Events still in the womb of fate would justify his faith. The hard facts of Germany's internal state would compel the German representatives to bow before his will. Even at the moment of their surrender he would have but a hazy idea of those facts. But his power to believe what he willed to believe served as a substitute for knowledge—of things still hidden from the Allied command. His faith would achieve its supreme triumph. It was the foundation of an unconscious bluff which would reap the full harvest of victory without further exertion and cost; which would, indeed, be far more sure of gaining that result than a continuation of the offensive.

If political realism directed his course, it is Foch's greater glory that humanity was present in waiting. At the point where he had satisfied the needs of his country, his religion took charge. Calculating that his armistice terms would give his country all the fruits of victory, he sacrificed the ornamental laurels which might have been placed on his brow by a decisive victory in the field. It is true that such a victory might not have come from a continuation of the fighting, and of sacrifice. But Foch believed that it would. Here, certainly, the greater Foch's delusion, the greater is the tribute to his restraint.

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The one serious objection to it came from Pershing, who, on October 30th, sent House a letter protesting against granting any armistice. His attitude was natural, for while his dream of building an independent American Army had been consummated, its vindication was still incomplete. But in the eyes of both House and Wilson, Foch's assurance outweighed Pershing's protest. And Foch himself pointed out that this protest was inconsistent with Pershing's approval of his own conditions as sufficient to render Germany helpless.

To clarify the problem, House asked: "Will you tell us, Marshal, solely from the military point of view, apart from any other consideration, whether you would prefer the Germans to reject or sign the Armistice as outlined here?"

To this question Foch delivered the historic reply: "War is only a means to results. If the Germans now sign an armistice under our conditions those results are in our possession. This being achieved, no man has the right to cause another drop of blood to be shed."

The results he sought by his conditions went, however, far beyond the military needs and Wilson's purview. Once the German Army was out of the way, France would be able to frame the peace on her terms rather than on those of President Wilson. Thus the ironical result of his action in allowing Foch to settle the Armistice conditions was that he nullified the peace conditions set out in his own Fourteen Points.

With equal irony, the one political voice raised against Foch's right of decision was that of the French Prime Minister. At an informal preliminary meeting with Lloyd George and House on the 29th, Clemenceau declared: "If Foch decides, the Governments are suppressed. I propose that we consult Marshal Foch and all others whose advice may be necessary. Then we will transmit our conclusions to President Wilson." But the others had more faith in Foch than Clemenceau felt. Lloyd George pointed out that to transmit the terms through Washington would prevent any give and take, forcing the Germans to accept or reject the terms as a whole. House then suggested that President Wilson, after endorsing the terms, should simply tell

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the Germans to make their appeal to Foch, under a white flag. This solution was adopted.

On November 1st there was another of these informal meetings—which were adroitly used to decide what the formal meetings of the Supreme War Council should decide. Foch attended this meeting and also Sir Eric Geddes, representing the Allied Naval Council. As a sop to British objections, Foch had agreed to give up the demand for a bridgehead at Strasbourg; as this was the bridgehead he had claimed in his first proposals, his readiness to surrender it in favour of the later-claimed bridgeheads is evidence of the way his appetite had grown—outgrowing the military object. Lloyd George seems to have recognised this fact, for he remarked: "All the great cities of Western Germany will be in our hands. The Conference must realise that we are making a very stiff demand. I ask Marshal Foch if it would not be possible to secure the bridgeheads required for military purposes without occupying the great cities."

Foch replied: "Mainz is absolutely indispensable. Frankfort will not be occupied, although I admit that it will be within two miles of the occupied territory and under the guns of the Allies. I must also insist that Cologne is of tremendous importance, as it is the junction of many railways and the focus of the land communications of the Palatinate; therefore I regard Cologne as an indispensable bridgehead."

Foch further declared that he "could never agree to" Haig's proposals, for "the enemy would be in a better defensive situation than they were in now." "If Germany should break off the peace negotiations the Allies ought to be in a position to destroy her." But once more he did not confine himself to the military sphere: "If peace follows the Armistice, then we should have in our hands the territory we wanted, even under Field-Marshal Haig's conditions. But the question is what pledges and guarantees we should have in order to secure the indemnities we require."

Lloyd George interposed to point out that Haig's doubt was not as to the advantage of possessing the bridgeheads, but as to the enemy's willingness to surrender them. "Haig took the view that the German Army was by no means broken. Wherever

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you hit them they hit back hard and inflicted heavy casualties. They were being gradually pushed back . . . but showed none of the symptoms of a disorganised army. Their retirement was effected in perfect order and was conducted with the greatest skill. . . . Sir Douglas Haig considered that they would retreat from their present line of 400 kilometres to one of 245 kilometres, and that nothing the Allies could do would prevent it. On this shorter line they would save seventy divisions and would be able to hold on." Hence, Lloyd George remarked: "The real point is whether we are in a position to enforce Marshal Foch's terms."

To this pertinent question Foch replied that, if he was asked whether the German Army was now reduced to acceptance, his answer would be "No." But "without the bridgeheads we could never be master of Germany. It was essential first to be master of the Rhine." Hence it was better to risk refusal than to ask anything less. He admitted that "the German Army could undoubtedly take up a new position this side of the Rhine, and that we could not prevent it." But he said that he could continue driving the Germans back during the winter, and that "the collapse of Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey" would have an important effect on the situation.

There is a significant change to be discerned in Foch's attitude now as compared with a week or so earlier. He was coming to realise, as Haig had already done, that the prospects of his offensive were waning and the enemy slipping out of reach. But his conviction of what was necessary and his hope of new developments—outside the Western Front—combined to reinforce his faith.

He was willing, however, to concede what did not concern him, and urged that the enemy's acquiescence in his military terms should not be endangered by severe naval terms. Hence he opposed the demand for the surrender of 10 battleships and 6 battle cruisers as well as the 150 submarines. He scoffingly asked the British: "As for the German surface fleet, what do you fear from it? During the whole war only a few of its units have ventured from their ports. The surrender of these units will be merely a manifestation, which will please the public but

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nothing more. Why make the Armistice harder? for I repeat that its sole object is to place Germany *hors de combat*. . . . I do not understand why we should demand the battle cruisers. . . . It would not be right to ask the armies to go on fighting in order to secure these conditions."

Geddes retorted: " Marshal Foch is wrong in saying that the submarines alone have hurt us. But for the Grand Fleet the ships it is now proposed to take would have been out on the trade routes and inflicting great destruction on the Allies. They would even interrupt the arrival of the American troops. Marshal Foch has no idea how much trouble the High Seas Fleet has given us—because the Grand Fleet has always held it in check. If these ships are not surrendered, the Grand Fleet, during the Armistice, will be in the same state of tension as that of two armies opposed to each other in the trenches."

Lloyd George settled the difference by the compromise solution, effective but less humiliating, that the naval terms should demand the internment of the enemy's surface ships instead of their actual surrender. If the British Admiralty was dissatisfied with the solution, so also was Foch, and he made up his mind that if any "give" was necessary in the Armistice negotiations, his generosity should take a naval form.

The relaxation would be unnecessary. And another of Lloyd George's calculated evasions would be a means of absolving Foch from it. Austria's appeal for an Armistice had been received. Lloyd George insisted that the Allied generals should prepare terms at once and that they should be submitted to Austria before an answer was sent to Germany. For he shrewdly argued: "As soon as Austria is out, Germany will capitulate." So, again, he postponed a final decision on the naval terms until Austria's answer was received, contending that "if Austria accepted our armistice, we could then put stiffer terms to Germany."

On November 4th Austria accepted terms which were accurately summed up in Clemenceau's remark: "We have left the Emperor his breeches and nothing else." Next day President Wilson notified the German Government that Foch was authorised to receive their representatives and to communicate

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to them the conditions for an armistice. His note also stated that the Allies accepted the Fourteen Points as a basis for peace, with two reservations—the freedom of the seas and reparation of all damage caused to the civil population. The first was a concession to British opinion; the second, to French. When Lloyd George objected that reparations were a condition of peace, not of an armistice, Clemenceau cleverly and disarmingly argued: "I wish only to make mention of the principle," while the French Finance Minister strengthened its potential effect by inserting the innocent-looking qualification that "any future claims or demands on the part of the Allies remain unaffected."

* * * * *

The day of November 7th was half an hour old when Foch received a wireless message from the German Supreme Command giving the names of their envoys and asking him to fix a meeting-place. It added: "The German Government would be glad if, in the interest of humanity, the arrival of the German delegation might cause a provisional suspension of hostilities." Foch ignored this request in his reply and simply told the German envoys to present themselves at the outposts on Debeney's front. Besides being the nearest it was a comparatively safe route to take.

At 5 p.m., accompanied by Admiral Wemyss as naval representative, Foch left Senlis by a special train for Rethondes, in the forest of Compiègne. His train was run on to a siding built for super-heavy railway guns. There was another track, still empty. Foch, in jovial mood, entertained the British naval delegates in the dining saloon of his train, while in the dark forest outside a ring of sentries guarded the approaches to the clearing. Dinner finished, the other track was still empty. Foch retired to his *wagon-lit*, and to sleep. Not until seven o'clock next morning did the other train steam slowly into the siding; the German envoys had been delayed by road blocks behind the German front. Weygand boarded the train to announce that Foch would receive them at or after 9 a.m.

"It was the best day of my life . . . when I saw them in front of me, aligned along the other side of the table, I said

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to myself: 'There's the German Empire!' I can assure you that I was a proud man. I thought: 'We'll be polite, but we must show them who we are.' " With his voice he would drown the fanfares of Manteuffel that had echoed in his ears for almost half a century. He became a schoolboy again.

As the envoys filed into the saloon carriage at nine o'clock they were received "stiffly but courteously" by Weygand and Admiral Hope. Weygand said that he would inform Marshal Foch of their arrival. A few minutes later Foch appeared, with Wemyss, and exchanged salutes. His stern face showed no trace of pity for the envoys' humiliation. He had much to repay. Erzberger, who headed the delegation, had the impression of Foch as "a little man of impulsive ways who showed at first glance the habit of command." In a muffled tone, he presented his fellow-envoys to Foch, who curtly remarked: "Gentlemen, have you any papers? We must examine their validity."

Foch then withdrew for a moment with Wemyss and Weygand to examine the credentials signed by Prince Max of Baden which gave Erzberger, Count Oberndorff, Major-General von Winterfeldt, and Naval Captain Vanselow "full power . . . to conduct . . . negotiations for an armistice and to conclude an agreement to that effect, provided it be approved by the German Government." Two younger officers completed the delegation. One of them, Captain Geyer, was militarily the most significant member, for he was the man who had framed the infiltration tactics and written the textbooks on which the German Army had been trained for its devastating punches in the spring.

Satisfied with the examination, Foch seated himself at the table, Weygand on his right, Wemyss on his left. Erzberger sat down opposite Wemyss and Winterfeldt opposite Foch. By strange coincidence Winterfeldt's father had helped to settle the terms of the French capitulation in 1870.

Foch, faithful to his principles, took the offensive with the question: "What's the purpose of your visit? What do you want of me?"

Erzberger courteously replied that they had come to receive "the proposals of the Allied Powers towards the conclusion of an armistice. . . ."

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"I have no proposal to make."

Disconcerted and mystified, the Germans sat silent. Then Oberndorff asked: "How do you wish us to express ourselves? We are not standing on any form of words. We are ready to say that we ask the conditions of an armistice."

"I have no conditions to give you."

Erzberger then began to read out President Wilson's note. Foch stopped him. "Do you wish to ask for an armistice? If so, say so—formally."

"Yes, that's what we are asking."

"Good, then we'll read out to you the conditions on which it can be obtained."

Weygand thereupon read the principal clauses, which were translated as he read them. Meantime, Foch sat as gravely solemn as a statue of Justice, save for the relief of an occasional sharp pull at his moustache. Wemyss played with his eyeglass, Winterfeldt began to look more and more crestfallen. Erzberger and Oberndorff might have been listening to a casual conversation.

When Weygand finished, Erzberger intervened to ask that military operations should be immediately suspended, saying that revolution had broken out, and that the soldiers were refusing to obey orders. He feared that Bolshevism might gain a grip, and once Central Europe was invaded by this scourge Western Europe would have difficulty in escaping it. The German Government needed freedom from Allied pressure so that they could restore discipline in the Army and order in the country.

The account of Germany's internal state was a revelation to Foch. It provided facts to confirm his faith—and reinforce his bluff. He abruptly rejected Erzberger's plea. "You are suffering from a loser's malady. I am not afraid of it. Western Europe will find means of defending itself against the danger."

Then Winterfeldt produced a paper, saying that he had been entrusted with a special mission by the Government and the Supreme Command. He read out a declaration to the effect that: "The Armistice conditions to which we have just listened require careful examination. In view of our intention to reach

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a settlement the examination will be made as rapidly as possible; all the same, this will require a certain interval of time. . . . During this time the struggle between our armies will continue and will inevitably take toll of numerous victims, among the troops and the people, who will have fallen needlessly at the last minute and who might be preserved for their families." Hence the German Government and command repeated their original proposal for a suspension of hostilities.

Foch inflexibly replied: "No. I represent here the Allied Governments, who have settled their conditions. Hostilities cannot cease before the signing of the Armistice."

"Will it at least be possible to prolong for twenty-four hours the interval allowed for our reply. We need time to communicate with our Government."

"We will facilitate this communication, but the time-limit has been fixed by our Governments, and it cannot be prolonged; it's for seventy-two hours, and it will expire Monday morning [the 11th] at eleven o'clock."

One surmises that in this hour of triumph Foch recalled the discussions between Bismarck and Thiers, and that he was revenging the contumely suffered by the favourite author of his boyhood.

Captain von Helldorf was then dispatched to Spa with the Armistice terms. Meanwhile the German delegation asked for opportunity to obtain an explanation of some of the detailed points. They were granted it, but to emphasise its purely explanatory nature Weygand and Admiral Hope were assigned for the purpose. The Germans did not contest any of the chief military or naval conditions, but they protested that the surrender of so many machine-guns left them insufficient to maintain order; that the time allowed for withdrawal across the Rhine was too short for an orderly retirement; that the maintenance of the blockade and the surrender of railway material were inhuman, as these would paralyse the task of feeding the people.

Foch meantime had sent a telephone message to Clemenceau—"All goes well," and he followed this by a written report that the Germans had accepted in principle the Armistice terms.

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After reading it, Clemenceau buried his head in his hands and wept silently; then checked himself, and cried: "It's absurd I'm no longer master of my nerves; this was too much for me, but all of a sudden I had a vision of 1870, the defeat, the shame, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine—and now that's all wiped out. Surely it's not a dream?" He hurried next morning to seek confirmation from Foch, who had gone back to Senlis for a few hours. "Marshal Foch dwelt above all on his own astonishment when he saw the Germans accept, so easily, the hard conditions as to the bridgeheads, the surrender of the fleet, the occupation of the Rhineland, while, on the contrary, they turned pale . . . when it came to the surrender of guns, machine-guns and locomotives." Foch's surprise shows not only that he had forgotten the Commune, but that he had not yet appreciated the real cause of the enemy's abject surrender.

Hence the unreality of the well-intentioned telegram which he had just sent to the several Commanders-in-Chief: "The enemy, disorganised by our repeated attacks, is giving way along the whole front. . . . I call on the energy and initiative of the Commanders-in-Chief and their armies to render decisive the results obtained." The explanation of his outlook was given by himself: "With the Germans one must be prepared for anything." He believed that the delegates' story of Germany's internal break-up was only a military subterfuge.

On his return to Rethondes he received the detailed observations of the German delegates upon his terms, and prepared his answer after a telephone talk with Clemenceau. To the appeal that they might be given more time to withdraw from the left bank of the Rhine, he merely replied that they could re-form their army when they reached the right bank. To the objection that they were not left sufficient machine-guns to repress insurrection, he said that they could use their rifles. To the question as to the Allies' future intentions in the Rhineland, he answered that he did not know and that it was not his business. To the complaint that they were not left sufficient locomotives for the transport of food supplies, he retorted that he was only taking such locomotives as the Germans themselves had taken from the French and Belgian people. He made few concessions.

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The Germans were allowed fifteen days instead of fourteen for the evacuation of invaded territory, thirty-one days instead of twenty-five to complete their withdrawal; and the number of machine-guns to be surrendered was reduced from 30,000 to 25,000.

Foch awoke on the 10th, a Sunday, with the feeling that the day would see the end of the war. He left the train to go to Mass. But, while he was praying, uneasiness was growing among those who stayed behind. For a fresh flux was threatened by the news that, following the Kaiser's abdication, a new Government had been formed in Berlin. Both the Allied and the German delegations were now in a quandary. Would the new Government recognise the authority of the envoys sent by Prince Max, and would it have the power to fulfil the Armistice terms? Evening came, and still no word had come. In the forest clearing at Rethondes the darkness outside the lighted windows of the two trains was no denser than that which reigned within. At half-past six Foch sent a note of reminder that the time-limit was due to expire next morning. Its recipients were incapable of reply.

But towards eight o'clock a wireless telegram was intercepted :

"The German Government to the plenipotentiaries at the Allied Headquarters: The German Government accepts the conditions of the Armistice communicated to it on November 8th.

"THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR—3,084."

The number, as Erzberger explained, was a code figure to establish its authenticity.

Foch thereupon asked the Germans "if they were at last ready to sign, and the sooner the better, if they truly desired, as they had not ceased repeating, to avoid useless bloodshed." But they asked permission first to decipher and discuss a long telegram which was just arriving from Hindenburg.

At eleven o'clock Foch lay down to snatch some rest. It was the first night since the Battle of the Marne, the second night during the whole war, that he missed his full ration of sleep. Two o'clock came on the morning of the 11th. The Germans

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were still in their own train. Five minutes past—they sent word that they were ready. Fifteen minutes—the delegates assembled in Foch's saloon. Weygand read out the slightly modified text, which was discussed anew, clause by clause. For over an hour Erzberger argued against the continuation of the blockade, as being a continued act of war. When he remarked that it "was not fair," the British admiral opposite retorted: "Not fair! Don't forget that you've sunk our ships without any distinction!" Bitter memories and inability to realise the conditions in Germany combined towards an unjustifiable infliction that would be bitterly remembered when other memories had begun to fade.

At five minutes past five discussion finished. Five minutes later the delegates affixed their signature to the agreement. At Foch's suggestion the hour of signing was timed as "5 a.m.," so that hostilities might cease exactly at 11 a.m. Erzberger read out a declaration that, while the German Government would make every effort "to see that the terms are fulfilled," the delegation registered a formal protest that these "may plunge the German people into anarchy and famine." The declaration concluded: "A nation of seventy millions suffers, but does not die."

Foch made the brief comment "*Très bien!*" but whether in irony or in homage to a soldierly sentiment will never be known. A message was then sent by wireless and telephone: "Hostilities will cease along the entire front on November 11th at 11 a.m. French time." It was indeed the French hour. At seven o'clock Foch left for Paris "with the Armistice in my pocket." As his car approached the long-menaced capital the early morning mist was dispersed by the sun. He called first to see Clemenceau and handed him the document with the words: "My work is finished; your work begins." Then, after a visit to Poincaré, he went home—to bear the good news to his family. "It was a market day, and, while I was having my lunch, they saw my car standing outside. They then began a demonstration under my windows. So I went off. I was recognised in the Place de l'Opéra. There was a bigger demonstration than ever . . . it seemed likely that they would drag me out of my car. . . . We succeeded in giving them the slip

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in the Rue Lafayette"—Foch could not escape the symbolical. • Most significant and self-revealing was his sentiment as he watched the crowds who were swarming to celebrate the end—after fifty-three months' trial—of the war. "Joy over delivery . . . but there was something more than that. It was victory—I repeat, victory! We could do what we wished with it."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLUTCH ON THE RHINE

ON the morrow of the Armistice Foch issued an order of the day, addressed to the officers and soldiers of the Allied Armies: "After resolutely repulsing the enemy for months, you confidently attacked him with an untiring energy. You have won the greatest battle in history and saved the most sacred of causes, the liberty of the world. Be proud. You have adorned your colours with immortal glory. Posterity reserves its gratitude for you."

When the order was brought for him to sign, he hesitated over the last sentence. Should it have been "will reserve"? After asking Weygand's advice he kept the present tense. But not merely on a point of style. "The future? That would be a command. The present is certain!" His preference for the present was both characteristic and prophetic.

For a few weeks joy would be unshadowed. While the popular radiance lasted it would be focused, above all, on Foch. Then he would begin to slip, and to be pushed, into the shadow.

On November 17th the Allied Army of Occupation began its march forward from the armistice line. Forty divisions were at the outset to be the unwelcome paid guests of the German Government. On December 1st their advanced guards crossed the pre-1870 frontier of Germany. The advance was slow—slower than the timetable. The tardy pace of this unresisted march cast its reflection upon the vaunting claims that only the Armistice prevented a rapid pursuit to the Rhine by the victorious

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Allies. Not until December 13th did they cross the Rhine; four days more elapsed before they completely occupied the bridge-heads and mounted the guard on the Rhine. "From its shores," as Foch wrote, "they beheld vanquished Germany at their feet; at the slightest attempt on her part to lift her head and cause trouble, they had but to make a move to stop it. Posted there, they enabled the Allied Governments to dictate to the Central Powers whatever conditions of peace they might consider it proper to impose."

In Alsace-Lorraine the French troops had earlier arrived—as home-comers, not as occupiers. Following in their wake, Foch himself went to Metz—in the fulfilment of a vow and a dream. To that city which he had left as a young student, he came back as the leader of the greatest host any one man had ever commanded.

He had seen it once in the interval, but as a nameless visitor, risking his career on a sentimental escapade. Some years before the war, the temptation to see his old college had led him to defy the regulations which debarred the annexed provinces to French officers. Knowing that it might cost him arrest and imprisonment for spying, fearing that his passage was noted, he had taken the risk of gaining Metz by way of Luxembourg. He had gone straight to St. Clement's. It had seemed deserted, and he began to wander round its silent cloisters, when, suddenly, he ran into a sister of mercy. In talking to her he forgot caution, until she startled him with the remark: "You seem to know the House well." Explanations would have been embarrassing. He broke off the conversation, and caught the next train from Metz.

The surreptitious visit had only quickened his hunger of soul. During the war Metz became the symbol of his goal. Writing to an old friend in January, 1915, he said: "I have already asked Joffre and the Government for the command of the army corps at Metz. My dream is to carry my fanion there. . . . After that glorious day, I shall feel repaid for everything." It would be long postponed.

But it came at last on November 26th, 1918. At eleven o'clock the previous night Foch's train steamed into the station and

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drew up beneath the bomb-shattered roof. Foch alighted and was received in the Kaiser's special waiting-room. "Motor-cars had come to meet us, but I did not wish to take one. I was so happy that I said to Weygand: 'Stop, here's a good cigar for you; let's go for a stroll.' For an hour I piloted him round Metz without losing him. The weather was vile. The streets were covered with snow. There was no one about. In the square we saw Boche statues which had been dragged from their plinths and hurled to the ground. Yes, I shall certainly never forget it." They stole round for a glimpse of the dim outline of the college. And, puffing at his pipe, Foch pointed out the little tobacconist's where he had bought his first cigarettes.

When daylight came the vista changed from intimacy to splendour. His old 39th Division was assembling for a great review. "To see French troops marching past on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville at Metz was an ample reward for all my efforts." After forty-seven years, the fanfares of Foch drowned the echoes of Manteuffel's. The ceremony over, Foch said: "Now I am going to thank the Lord of Hosts for having granted me the victory. The troops can dismiss." To render thanks, he felt, should be a voluntary act, not a compulsory parade. But the Cathedral was packed for this *Te Deum*. "It was extraordinary, . . . When it was all over, the crowd sang the 'Marseillaise' in the church." "I always used to tell myself, in the old days, that I should not like to die till I could hang up my sword, as a votive offering, on the walls of Metz Cathedral. Oh, I shall do it! I have promised!" As patriotism merged into his religion, so did his exultation over the *revanche* merge into a higher sense of liberation. With this he would fill his lungs every time he came to the regained provinces. On one such visit, noticing that the abandon with which he joined in the national anthem had been remarked, he explained: "To sing a full-throated 'Marseillaise' in Alsace, where formerly one was forbidden even to hum it—I know no greater pleasure!" To breathe freely once again, that was the clue not merely to his momentary abandon but to his future policy of precaution.

The effect is to be traced in the note, the first of a series, which he addressed to the French Government on November 27th,

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the day after his ceremonial release of Metz from its half-century's captivity. He claimed that the Rhine must be the future western frontier of Germany, and, further, that the victors must mount guard upon it in perpetuity. His argument took as its starting-point the question of potential military manpower: "That point dominated all others." Germany, even if deprived of Alsace-Lorraine, the Posen region and Schleswig, would still number over sixty million inhabitants. She would still outnumber an enlarged France and Belgium by ten millions, and her higher birth-rate would tend to increase the disproportion. "The situation, then, would be appreciably more perilous for us after the war than before—because Russia's man-power was no longer available to redress the deficit, and might even coalesce with Germany."

There was one counterbalance, and only one—the natural barrier offered by the Rhine. "Whoever holds its bridges is master of the situation; he can easily repulse invasion, and, if attacked, can carry the war into the enemy's country." By using this great ditch as the frontier, France would be safeguarded against a Germany which, "by reason of her ever-increasing population and the militarist spirit that will always manifest itself," would ever be a menace. "Any other frontier is bad for us, and may give us illusory security, but not genuine security."

There is no question that Foch desired that the Rhine should also become the eastern frontier of France. But he came early to fear that this was an impracticable ideal, if he did not fully appreciate the strength of the resistance to it. His alternative from the outset was to convert the Rhineland into a buffer state separated from Germany and unarmed, while under the military control of France. Foch supported his arguments with the historical analysis of the Dutch occupation of a fortress barrier in Flanders during the eighteenth century, of Britain's creation of Belgium as a buffer state in the nineteenth century, and of the use of the Rhine barrier itself by Prussia and Austria after 1815. If he was historically justified in contending that a military barrier had then been considered necessary, and had proved useful, in supplementing pacts of mutual assistance, he

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omitted the fact that these precautions had not been taken at the territorial expense of the defeated Power.

Foch believed in the sovereign virtues of his new panacea as fervently as he had once believed in the offensive. He was as single-minded as ever. He preached this new theory of *sûreté* with the same fervour as his old. Seeing only one thing at a time, he regarded this aim as the ideal military guarantee of security. He did not pause to ask himself whether it was politically wise or practicable. It may seem curious that a man who had just found such heavenly relief in being able to draw a free breath in Alsace-Lorraine should fail to ponder the danger of curtailing another's freedom. But, after following Foch through so many years, there is no ground for surprise.

On December 1st Foch travelled to London with Clemenceau, and was accorded a tremendous ovation by a people who saw in him the creator of victory. In return, he spoke warmly of the British Army and of Haig. That evening Foch attended a meeting at 10, Downing street, where, according to Wilson, he "developed his proposals that in order to face the sixty-five to seventy-six million Boches over the Rhine, he wanted to combine all the French, Belgian, Luxembourg, and Rhenish provinces in one Confederation, amounting to fifty-four millions, which, with the help of the British, might hope to cope with the Boches. Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law were opposed to this, as making of the Rhenish provinces another Alsace and Lorraine." Foch's emphasis on material, or, rather, numerical factors is as significant as his neglect of moral factors.

On the following day he obtained permission to extend the Armistice and to exact further pledges if necessary. He also expressed the view that the British ought to keep ten divisions in the occupied territory even after peace was signed, and a further ten in Belgium or France. On the 4th he returned to France, delighted with his own reception but disappointed at the way his proposals had been received. That disappointment was a foretaste of a greater.

Clemenceau had adopted the Rhine frontier for Germany as the basis of his peace proposals, coupled with the continued occupation of the bridgeheads. But he had few illusions as to

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the difficulty of gaining the Allied statesmen to its acceptance, especially as President Wilson was coming to Europe with the Covenant of the League of Nations as his basis for a secure peace.

The Peace Conference was unpromisingly late in gathering. Wilson did not arrive until Friday, December 13th, and further postponement was caused by Lloyd George's desire to obtain a decisive mandate from the British electorate. Not until January 18th did the Conference open. The delay in assembly foreshadowed the delay in agreement, and with delay fresh complications arose to cause further delay.

The armies were growing restive, the men clamouring for demobilisation. Foch began to fear that they would slip away like sand between his fingers. Henry Wilson's diary for February 3rd has the entry: "Dined with Foch and Madame Foch. He is very anxious about the general situation and the total inability of the Peace Conference to come to any decision on any subject. He says his men won't stand it much longer, and will demobilise themselves just as the Belgians are doing. Foch has a supreme contempt for such ideas as League of Nations, Mandatories, etc." He had equally little belief in any proposals for limiting men or arms. He had previously remarked: "We can no more limit the number of men trained to arms in Germany than the Germans could limit the output of coal in England." Because of this view he was more convinced than ever that the line of the Rhine, no less and no more, was the one guarantee adequate. On January 10th he again set forth his views in a memorandum which he laid before both the French and Allied Governments. He would have liked the chance to plead his case in the Conference, but on the morning it met he received a telephone message that Clemenceau thought it preferable for him not to attend. The ground given was that Foch's position as Allied Commander-in-Chief disqualified him from being a French spokesman. The real ground was probably the fact of Foch being a soldier.

Foch did not find the decision agreeable. "It is really extraordinary that M. Clemenceau did not think of me in the first place as a suitable person to overcome the resistance of

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President Wilson and Lloyd George. It was fortunate that the Supreme Commander who led the Allied armies to victory was a Frenchman . . . the future security of France and the Allies, as well as the avoidance of more aggression from Germany . . . were questions eminently military in nature. It was the right and duty of a commander to express his views. France's representative at the Conference could use him to illustrate his theory and overcome resistance. He could say: 'I am obliged to accede to Foch in all that pertains to security. Foch will not hear of any solution other than the Rhine as a military frontier. Anything you could offer me in exchange—the disarmament of Germany, pacts, temporary occupation—he considers entirely inadequate. I cannot ignore his resistance or combat his state of mind. For it is obvious that on this point he has the country at his back.'” The argument certainly reveals Foch as the simple soldier.

It is unlikely that with more opportunity to express his views he would have made more impression on the Allied statesmen. For, in fact, he was tireless in taking opportunities to proclaim his opinion. And it rather tended to harden the resistance. Neither President Wilson nor Lloyd George was sympathetic to military intervention in discussions of policy. But for a time the issue was postponed by Wilson's return to America and the necessity for detailed study of the various problems by expert committees. In the interval the question of extending the Armistice, already renewed twice, came up for consideration—at a moment when there were alarmist rumours of a rearming by Germany. Henry Wilson and Diaz voted for a further encroachment on German territory. Bliss opposed them. Foch gave no hint of his view. But after the meeting he told Bliss privately that he was in sympathy with the American view, and that the other might cause a fresh blaze. Foch may have been inspired by the idea of gaining American sympathy for his own Rhine project, but the incident at least shows that he kept a cooler head than Wilson. More significantly he argued that “an immediate peace should be made with Germany so that the wheels of industry should be started in motion throughout the world.”

After his meeting with the German delegates on February 17th,

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Foch took up still more strongly the question of an early settlement. He was convinced that the Germans were in the mood for it and ready to accept "whatever terms we exact." While confident that they had no force capable of resistance, he declared that delay might be dangerous. If the Allies would determine the three principal conditions—the strength of Germany's armed forces, her frontiers, and the indemnity to be paid—he would guarantee that the Germans would accept them the following day. "The world would then pass from a state of war to a state of peace for which it longs so ardently, and there would be universal rejoicing."

As regards the first condition, he advocated that Germany should be restricted to a conscript army of 100,000 men on a basis of one year's service. As regards the indemnities he proposed, more wisely than the French politicians, the fixing of a lump sum for Germany to pay. Admitting that it was not his business to consider this point, he suggested a hundred milliards of francs—twenty times the indemnity demanded of France in 1870. One ground for an early settlement, in his opinion, was the need of concentrating on the Russian problem; here he favoured the idea of giving help to all the anti-Bolshevik elements in Russia and, even more, to Russia's neighbours—for he did not trust the capacity of Denikin and Koltchak.

Unfortunately for his object, he could not refrain from declaring that any preliminary peace treaty ought to lay down that "under no circumstances will the German Empire extend beyond the Rhine," whatever might be the ultimate decision as to the Rhenish Provinces. This demand, ceaselessly reiterated, cost him the American sympathy that he had so carefully sought to woo. President Wilson, in particular, saw in Foch's arguments for a quick settlement merely a move to "hurry us into an acquiescence" in the French "plans with regard to the western bank of the Rhine." There was some ground for the suspicion, and it would recoil on Foch's own position.

He had established an advanced headquarters at Luxembourg, whence he later transferred it to Kreuznach, close to the Rhine. If this move enabled him to supervise arrangements for a possible advance into Germany, it also gave him the opportunity to keep

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touch with any developments in the Rhineland Separatist movement, that feeble shoot so assiduously nursed by Mangin and the staff of the French Army of Occupation. While disorder reigned in Berlin and Munich there was a partial and momentary impulse to consider autonomy, and a few meetings were held. The resolution passed at one such meeting, on February 22nd, was carried to Foch, who sent back a reply to the effect that the people of the Palatinate would soon be able to speak openly, and that guarantees would be given them to enable them to act without fearing the return of the German authorities.

The hope of an independent Republic, voluntarily constituted, would prove a fresh delusion. Those who held it were still, in imagination, living in 1793. Least happy of all was the attempt at forcible incubation. Yet it would seem that Foch would have liked still more forcible measures. For, in regretful contemplation of what might have been, he remarked: "I say it was necessary to pave the way for such a policy, seize firm hold of the territory, exact the immediate expulsion of all Prussian officials, etc."

On March 14th President Wilson arrived back in France, and the Conference faced the larger issues. If Wilson's position at home was now weakened by the Senatorial opposition, he was not in the mood for compromise either at home or abroad. And in resisting Clemenceau's arguments for the Rhine frontier he had the full support of Lloyd George. Yet by skilfully exploiting the vulnerable points in their armour, by playing on Lloyd George's maritime claims and Wilson's dominant desire for the acceptance of the League Covenant, Clemenceau gradually wore down their resistance and obtained concessions far larger than they had contemplated or desired. Apart from the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar basin was to be alienated from Germany for a period of fifteen years—when a plebiscite would determine its future—and its coal-mines were to be ceded to France. Reparations were left indefinite, so as to extract all that could be squeezed out of Germany. The left bank of the Rhine and a fifty-kilometre strip on the right bank were to be demilitarised for ever, and the occupation was to be continued for a

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period of years—the Mainz bridgehead to be held for fifteen years, the Coblenz bridgehead for ten years, and the Cologne bridgehead for five years.

Clemenceau's achievement, however, failed to satisfy Foch. In his eyes the most satisfactory compromise could not atone for the sacrifice of a principle—a principle that consisted of a water line. The decisive obstacle in the way of his desire was another man of principle, President Wilson, who based himself on a moral line.

Foch seems to have deceived himself as to the strength of this obstacle, perhaps mistaking Colonel House's tolerant understanding of his point of view for an acquiescence in his aim. Foch ascribed the ultimate American stand against his desire "largely to the intrigues and the insistence of the English." "Once Germany had been beaten, England was sure to revert instinctively to her traditional policy of checking the victor—in this case, France—from becoming over-powerful." "Neither would she approve of a Rhineland separated from Germany and therefore disposed to gravitate, politically and economically, within the orbit of France. . . . The balance of power in Europe, for centuries the A B C of England's statesmen, might be endangered. Only cold resolution on our part could overcome such strong opposition. We should have done all that was possible to prevent an Anglo-American pact."

With rather unbalanced bitterness Foch later complained that while France had gained nothing, England had obtained all her own demands. "Those demands were far from being moderate; they were colossal." Confounding the Armistice with the Peace, forgetful that England was as relieved as France was aggrieved when the Germans sank their own fleet at Scapa, Foch declared: "The greater portion of the German fleet . . . was forced to deliver itself into the hands of England. . . . History can offer no analogy (*sic*) for such a cession. Sedan was nothing in comparison." His constitutional inability to understand naval questions and history is even more reflected in his astonishing statement that the German Navy "had never constituted a serious menace to England." So, also, there was a sublime disregard of the part played and the losses suffered by the British

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mercantile marine in his remark: "And England did not limit herself to the Navy, but took unto herself the best items of Germany's commercial fleet." He could not see that the replacement of Britain's torpedoed shipping was analogous to the handing over of locomotives and coal-mines to France. He was more to the point in his reflections on the surrender of the German colonies, if they ignored France's share of the profits.

Despite Foch's faulty comparisons, there was a fundamental truth underlying them. For the nature of sea warfare is such that the mere curtailment of the German Navy was a firmer guarantee of naval security than the similar curtailment of the German Army was of military security. But while enforced disarmament is compatible with moral principles, the enforced dismemberment of a nation is not. Foch's desired guarantee could only be fulfilled by placing a part of Germany in permanent captivity. In believing that "cold resolution" would have gained his object, he overlooked the moral objection to it, and underestimated the weight of public opinion against it both in America and Britain.

Foch's belief that the Americans would have accepted his plan, if left to themselves, may have been due to the fact that he had mooted it to the British and had felt their resistance first. Perhaps, also, his outlook may have been affected by his preliminary tussle with the British over the future of the German Army, wherein he had to forgo a principle. He was defeated by Henry Wilson, who advocated that Germany should be compelled to adopt a long-service professional instead of a short-service conscript army. His argument was accepted by Lloyd George, House, and Clemenceau, although as a concession to Foch the limit of 100,000 men was decided upon instead of Wilson's figure of 140,000. Wilson remarked: "So I got my principle, but not my numbers, and Foch got his numbers but not his principle. An amazing state of affairs."

When "the other" Wilson arrived from America he at first showed an inclination to reopen the matter and to support Foch's principle of conscription. Knowledge of this attitude was likely to strengthen Foch's delusion as to the greater issue. But he might have taken warning from several incidents.

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On the 19th he was summoned with the other military advisers to a meeting of the statesmen who were discussing the clash between the Ukrainians and Poles at Lemberg. But when the question of the Polish frontier was brought up, President Wilson made prompt objection, saying that frontiers had nothing to do with soldiers. A few days later the Bolshevik movement in Hungary seized control of that country. Foch at once worked out a plan for dealing with the situation by military force, and urged that his plan should be executed forthwith. Clemenceau and Lloyd George listened rather dubiously. President Wilson's disapproval was more emphatic, and, after Foch had left, the "Council of Four" unanimously decided against military action.

On the 29th a fresh complication developed through the German Government's objection to Haller's Polish force being sent to Danzig on its way from France to Poland. Foch would have liked a drastic retort to their objection, but he was instructed to settle the question by meeting a German plenipotentiary at Spa. President Wilson concluded with the pointed remark: "And I would affectionately ask General Foch to act more as a diplomat than as a soldier." Henry Wilson's diary gives an amusing account of Foch's reaction: "The old boy's face was a study, and he put his hands up to his mouth and said in an audible whisper to me: '*Ce n'est pas commode, Henri!*'"

Foch utilised the opportunity given by this mission to raise a greater issue. Asking for guidance as to the line he should take at Spa, he also asked that his general views might be heard by the Council of Four. The hearing was granted, and on March 31st Foch came to it armed with a memorandum that dwelt principally upon the Rhine frontier, with a map on which to point his arguments. "I proved that only the Rhine could protect us against a mass invasion by seventy million Germans swelled by hordes of Slavs." "I tried to arrange my arguments in close, rapid succession, as if they were troops about to charge. I reasoned quickly and hotly. . . . I showed that, by abandoning the Rhine, France would in a measure commit suicide." "There is no principle by which a victorious nation can be forced to restore the means of her own security to her enemy. After a

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free people has paid for her independence by more than a million and a half corpses and unparalleled devastation, no principle in the world can force her to live in perpetual fear of her neighbour, and to have alliances as her sole resources against disaster. No principle can prevail over a nation's right to existence or over the right of France and Belgium to secure independence."

"I concluded by saying: 'By renouncing the Rhine as a natural barrier, we should be conniving at an inconceivable, a monstrous situation. Germany would be able to continue her enterprises as though she had been victorious—the very Germany that has sent millions of human beings to death, the very Germany that planned to annihilate our country and leave her a heap of ashes, the very Germany that plotted to dominate the world by brute force—blood-stained, crime-stained Germany.'"

"I adjured the Allied Governments, who in their darkest hours had committed the care of their armies and the future of their cause to my hands, instantly to recognise that their future could be stabilised only by the Rhine as a military frontier and its occupation by the Allies." "I was at pains, as you see, to put great precision, logical force, and fire into my reasoning. I believe that if those who listened to me had not been beyond conviction, I should indeed have persuaded them."

One may grant that Foch, true to his name, was not wanting in fire, while feeling that he overestimated his own precision and logical force. More rhetorical restraint might have strengthened his influence, if it could hardly have helped him to gain adherence to his principle. The atmosphere of March, 1919, was no longer that of March, 1918. According to Mordacq's evidence, President Wilson sat throughout the discourse with an impassive face, while Lloyd George, lying back in an arm-chair, appeared to be dozing. When Foch finished, Clemenceau said that he would have the discourse translated. His colleagues replied that it was unnecessary, as they quite understood Foch's views. Foch then left for Spa. Wilson saw him on his return: "He says Germans agreed to all his terms. They cried out about Bolshevism, but got no sympathy from Foch." That same day, April 6th, Foch wrote afresh to Clemenceau, saying: "As discussions between the heads of the Allied Governments progress,

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undertakings may be made which cannot afterwards be disowned. It therefore seems to me imperative that I should meet the French delegates in order to know the exact state of affairs." The demand irritated Clemenceau, who told Foch in reply to keep within his own sphere, although adding that when a provisional draft of the Treaty was settled Foch would be given the chance to explain his theories to the Cabinet.

On April 15th Foch wrote again, asking to be summoned before the Cabinet, and declaring his disapproval of any compromise. This time he received no answer. After waiting two days, he wrote to Poincaré, on whose sympathy he could count, asking the President to convene a meeting of the Cabinet or of the French delegates. This indirect effort was of no avail, and only increased Clemenceau's annoyance at Foch's persistent intrusions into policy. The sequel was that he more and more avoided consulting Foch or giving him information as to the negotiations. Further incidents aggravated the friction. A few days previously the Council of Four had decided upon the evacuation of Odessa. Foch regarded this as a breach of faith with the "white" Russians, and refused to transmit the order, saying that he could not understand it. In reply to Clemenceau's irate rebuke, Foch answered: "I will always act in that way. I shall never give my subordinates an order that I cannot understand myself." Growing angrier, Clemenceau declared: "Things cannot go on like this." Foch retorted: "You can do whatever you like." In the end Clemenceau himself had dispatched the telegram. Foch's refusal would be followed by a second, that threatened graver consequences.

On April 17th Clemenceau notified Foch by telegram that the German delegates were to be invited to Versailles on the 25th to receive the text of the peace preliminaries, and instructed him to arrange for their journey. Foch refused to communicate the instructions to General Nudant, the French representative at Spa, saying that if Clemenceau wished the telegram to go, he could send it himself in his capacity of War Minister. Foch explained his refusal in a letter to Clemenceau: "The object of the telegram was in contradiction to the promise made to me that I would be granted a hearing by the Cabinet. Besides, the

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terms of this telegram were obscure." The last sentence, of course, was merely an afterthought; one must add that the complaint is not borne out by the text of the telegram.

Foch's attitude caused a sensation among the Allied statesmen. He had already caused one upset by giving an interview to the *Daily Mail*, in which he spoke strongly against the treaty to which he feared they were trending. President Wilson and Lloyd George had at once made a vigorous protest to Clemenceau, who had asked Foch for an explanation. Foch disavowed responsibility; when told that one of his officers had even revised the proofs, he replied that the officer in question was away on a journey.¹ The explanation was unconvincing, and the incident did not ease the reception of the next. When President Wilson heard of Foch's refusal to pass on the instructions of the Conference he declared: "I will not entrust the American Army to a general who does not obey his Government."

Clemenceau thereupon went so far as to arrange for the nomination of Pétain to replace Foch as Allied Commander-in-Chief. But he deferred action. One obvious reason is the impression such a step would make on the public, especially in France, where Foch's uncompromising claim for the Rhine was certainly endorsed by the mass of the people. According to Clemenceau's evidence, after some days had elapsed "I was authorised by the Allies to continue Foch in his post if he promised on his honour not to behave in the same way again. He pledged himself to everything I asked of him."

If Clemenceau showed marked forbearance, whatever the cause, towards Foch during these wrangles, it was his own neglectful attitude that had provoked Foch to insubordination. It was often only through Wilson that Foch learnt of the progress of discussions and the proposals that were being made, even as regards the terms of occupation. Wilson's diary has several illuminating entries during this period—for example: "Two hours with Foch, who is more maddened than ever with the

¹ Presumably Foch had forgotten this denial when some years later he told M. Recouly, "I had merely given an interview to the *Daily Mail* to say what I thought of the treaty that was being prepared."

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Frocks. He tells me that the Tiger never sees him nor tells him anything." The tragedy of this cleavage between two ardent patriots was that, like all unspannable gulfs, it sprang from two equally strong convictions of right. Foch's sense of his duty to *la patrie* was too strong on this occasion for his sense of duty as a soldier. Clemenceau's desire to secure the best bargain for his country that was practically possible led him to withhold information even on points that were the soldiers' concern. Apart from Clemenceau's masterful temperament, one reason for his tendency to keep Foch in the dark would seem to have been the feeling that to discuss compromises with a man who would not consider them might only impede them.

On April 25th, however, Foch was given his chance to address the Cabinet and the French delegates. The Council of Four had now agreed on the main terms, although the treaty was not yet ready for presentation to the German delegates. Clemenceau's demand for a thirty years' occupation of the Rhineland had been overcome, on Lloyd George's initiative, by the offer of an Anglo-American guarantee of immediate support to France in case of attack.

Foch began by saying that he must know the purport of the treaty before discussing it. Clemenceau replied that Foch was not called on to discuss it, but was merely being given a hearing for his views. Poincaré intervened to say that he understood the provisional draft had been communicated to Foch as a basis for his opinion. Clemenceau then said that he had not the right to disclose the draft, but would give a general idea of its contents. But he declared that he could not permit discussion of the treaty in Foch's presence; otherwise he himself would withdraw. Foch then read out his original memorandum of January 10th, defining the military conditions which he regarded as essential in any such treaty. "I stressed the importance always attached by Moltke to the Rhine question. I summarised his principles thus: 'Between Paris and Berlin the issue lies on the Rhine; whichever holds the river is certain of always dominating the other.'" He next read out his memorandum of March 31st, concluding with the verdict: "There is only one remedy: the occupation of the Rhine."

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Poincaré thereupon asked his opinion upon the Anglo-American offer of a defensive alliance. Foch replied: "A year must pass before England could send an army to France. . . . As for the American Army, it would need at least two years." He regarded such prospective alliances as "nebulous in the extreme" compared with "the solid reality of the guard on the Rhine." Poincaré's next question was whether the neutralisation of the left bank would compensate for the occupation of the river. "Such a guarantee is worthless." Foch added: "Our armies at present hold the barrier indispensable to our safety. To abandon it would be a crime against France." The Cabinet might be willing to take the responsibility; he would not. When asked to define his conception of the occupation, he answered that the bridgeheads should be held "as long as was necessary and, in fact, until there was a state of affairs established in Germany reassuring as to her intentions." As a definition it was a trifle vague. He concluded by declaring in "emotional words" that he would never concur in the prospective treaty.

He then left, in company with the two delegates, Jules Cambon and André Tardieu, who were not Ministers. As he left, he declared: "We shall all be accused of treason because the nation will not understand that from our victory bankruptcy is likely to come." After he had left, the Cabinet decided unanimously in favour of the draft treaty. Poincaré sat silent.

Foch "was now determined to make a supreme effort before the plenary meeting of the Conference." On May 5th he wrote to Clemenceau, sending a similar letter to President Wilson and Lloyd George, and asked for a copy of the treaty in order that he, as Commander-in-Chief, should know the military provisions on which he might have to act. His request was granted, Lloyd George strongly supporting it. Foch really wanted to see the treaty as the basis for a fresh appeal. He then asked to be heard at a plenary meeting of the Conference. This request was also granted.

Next afternoon he launched his forlorn hope. "I tried to be brief, arresting, penetrating. I did not marshal my arguments, but smashed them out as I would have used my fists in a fight." Foch declared that a fifteen-year occupation of the Rhineland

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was "from the military point of view no guarantee; it will merely place a heavy strain on the Allied occupation." "The Rhineland question is controlled by the Rhine. . . . If we in this room had to defend ourselves, we should only have to hold the doors and the enemy could not enter. But if we lost our position at the doors, he could be among us. In the same way, so long as we hold the Rhine barrier we are absolute masters of the left bank at very little cost. If we relinquish the Rhine, on the other hand, we shall need many troops to defend a region where we cannot but be weak, as the enemy will be free to attack us whenever he wishes." "Notice particularly that I ask for an occupation of the Rhine, not the Rhineland. . . . I merely want the Rhine bridgeheads, which would need very few troops."

Foch did not explain how the communications of the bridgehead forces would be maintained through a potentially hostile country. There was also a lapse of logic in his suggestion that when the treaty was well on its way to fulfilment the conditions might be lightened in "the form of a smaller occupying force, not the occupation of less territory." Such an alleviation would hardly be felt as such by the people of the occupied country.

"I could not possibly have been clearer or more vigorous or have tried harder to sway them. Unhappily, I swayed no one; the game was lost before ever it began; every mind was decided in advance." "I made that last attempt from a sense of duty, and because I wished to show generations to come that I had no part in such a treaty."

After his vain, vocally heroic effort, Foch felt that, as a silent protest, he would stay away from the formal session next day when the draft treaty was to be handed to the German delegates. But after reflection and consultation with Weygand he changed his mind. "It seemed to me that when the Allies were all united before the enemy's representatives, the Commander-in-Chief of their armies could not be absent. That was the reason that influenced me. A soldier's scruple."

He was also consoled, for the moment, by having registered his protest. Wilson notes that, after the session, "Foch telephoned to me . . . and told me all his impressions of our feebleness and Boches' truculence, and the ridiculous power we have

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given them of writing their objections. '*Soyez tranquille Henri, c'est une affaire de wagons.*' And, of course, he is right. He was in great form, now that his opinion as to the necessity of the Rhine front has been recorded in yesterday's *Procès*."

Foch also took any opportunity to deliver barbed thrusts at Ministers. To Klotz, the Finance Minister, he remarked: "With the treaty you have just signed, sir, you can expect with certainty to be paid with monkey tricks." Klotz cuttingly replied: "I am not in the habit of accepting such currency." "Well, you'll be obliged to take it."

The Germans replied to the draft treaty with well-argued objections, pointing out both its inconsistencies and its far-reaching divergences from the pre-armistice basis of the Fourteen Points. Lloyd George, like many others, was impressed by their reasoning and quickened to fresh objection. He remarked that the time had come to choose between a "hell-peace" and a "heaven-peace." Urged on by most of the members of the British Empire delegation, he urged modifications and the reduction of the occupation to a mere eighteen months. But Clemenceau stood firm against any concession, threatening to withdraw from the Conference rather than yield even one day's occupation. The scales were turned against moderation by the action of President Wilson in rallying to Clemenceau's support at the sacrifice of the pledge given by his Fourteen Points. Wilson recognised the difference between the treaty and his ideal, but seemingly felt that a bad treaty was better than none, and that to retract might look like weakness. The treaty at least embodied the Covenant of the League, and once Europe was "out of the atmosphere of war . . . it would be easier to come to satisfactory solutions."

The burning question now was whether the Germans would accept the terms. Foch did not think so, but at first was confident in his power to make them. When shown the Peace Treaty he had told Clemenceau: "As it stands, I undertake to make the Germans accept it without a moment's hesitation. Make it ten, twenty, or a hundred times more rigorous, and I give you my oath that I will make them accept it as quickly. I guarantee that the Germans will sign it. They cannot avoid it."

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But he was then canvassing for more drastic terms. When he came to examine the military problem he seems to have lost some of his confidence and to have discovered difficulties in the way of compelling acceptance.

He had originally received instructions to be ready to march forward into Germany on May 27th, but the fresh controversy provoked by the German reply intervened. When this was settled, he was again told to arrange an advance, with Berlin as his objective. Considering so distant a bound neither practicable nor secure, he raised objections, much to the annoyance of the statesmen. On June 16th he was suddenly recalled from Luxembourg to a meeting of the Council of Four, and on arrival at President Wilson's residence was kept waiting. It seemed to him an example of the growing contempt with which he was being treated. After fuming impatiently for some time he walked out of the house. When the statesmen discovered his absence they were aghast at the insult to their own dignity, and sent for Henry Wilson to ask if he could throw light on the meaning of Foch's behaviour. They told Wilson that "if Foch would not carry out their wishes, they must get someone who would. Wilson, however, supported Foch's opinion as to the difficulties of a march to Berlin, with all the railways in German hands. And when Clemenceau consulted Pétain, Foch's destined successor, he received a similar verdict.

An informal council of war was held on the 20th, and Foch here "opened by describing his two bounds to the Weser, and then a halt, pending further reinforcements and separate armistices with Würtemberg, Baden, and Bavaria." He would reach the Weser in fifteen days. As his arguments against going further than the Weser were endorsed by the other Allied generals, his plan was unwillingly accepted by the statesmen.

In later years his memory of this time of doubt seems to have faded, for he told M. Recouly: "We should only have had to press a button and give the signal to our troops, and the Allied armies, with full control of the Rhine and its tributaries, would hurl themselves onward to Berlin or Munich. In a few days, we could dictate whatever peace terms we needed."

The Germans did not put his more limited plan to the test.

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Threat was more potent than fact might have been. They agreed to sign unconditionally, and the ceremony took place in the palace at Versailles on June 28th. Foch was not present. "On that day I took refuge in my headquarters at Kreuznach." The elation of victory was gone, and he was left with a sense of bitter regret. To hug the Rhine in his person was a poignant symbol of his unsatisfied desire for what might have been.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE REFLEXIVE YEARS

ON July 14th, the national fête day of France, came what to the world seemed Foch's hour of supreme bliss. That morning he rode at the head of the French and Allied troops under the Arc de Triomphe, opened for the passage of the Victory Procession. By that passage the shame of 1870 was expunged and the glory of the *Grand Armée* recreated, with a difference, the difference embodied in the men who marched behind Foch. He was too deeply imbued with the sense of the past not to feel the thrill of that hour of vindication. His pallor betrayed his emotion, and for a moment, indeed, he felt a touch of faintness, quickly resisted. He, above all, was singled out for acclaim as, clad in blue-grey service uniform, mounted on a black thoroughbred, he rode with simple dignity between the ranks of the applauding multitude. But few among them guessed the diversity of his emotions. Some, perhaps, may have ascribed his sombre mien not merely to soldierly repression of joy but to thought of those, including his only son, who had paid the cost of his triumphal march. The crowd, however, could not yet know the sense of frustration which for him marred this hour of deliverance and checked his natural exultation.

It was easier perhaps for him to forget, when, five days later, he rode through London in another Victory Procession, although on this visit likewise his tired, strained look attracted notice. But if it was to British policy that he chiefly ascribed his dis-

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appointment, it was against French statesmen that his main complaint was directed. And the warmth of his reception by the British public conveyed so strong a sense of war comradeship as temporarily to assuage the stings of peace. According to Wilson, he "went off beaming after a wonderfully successful visit." Foch had even crowned it by a return to his old habit of exchanging headgear with Wilson, doubtless to the astonishment of an outwardly unmoved Grenadier Guardsman who, bringing a letter from Buckingham Palace to Foch's room at the Carlton Hotel, found the recipient in marshal's uniform surmounted by a too capacious "billy-cock" hat that almost engulfed his ears, while Wilson, in civilian dress, had a French *képi* perched on his head. Foch performed a more profoundly symbolical act on the day after the Victory Procession, when, going in solitude to High Mass at Westminster Cathedral, he paused and made a deep genuflection before the shrine of Joan of Arc, where serried candles shed their mystical radiance upon the Tricolour and Union Jack which conjointly hung above the figure of the Maid.

Ten days later Foch returned to London to receive from the King the baton of a British field-marshal that had been conferred upon him. He might have had a heavier reward, and his heart would have been lightened by it. "When the English were making grants to their admirals and generals, Lloyd George sent me a message by General Du Cane that he had suggested making one to me, but that Clemenceau had refused, saying: 'That is the business of the French Government.' I received the thanks of and congratulatory addresses from the House of Lords and the House of Commons." "The Americans, also, thought of making me a general of the United States, with pay. But discussing it with Briand—we were in London, when the proposal was made to me—we agreed that I could not accept because of the English precedent. There has been no further question of anything."

The French Government seems to have felt that duty was its own reward, and that the modest emoluments of a Marshal of France, reduced by the fall of the franc, should satisfy all material wants. The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate had already,

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on November 11th, spent several minutes of their valuable time in voting the decree that "the armies and their leaders; the Government of the Republic; the citizen Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister and Minister of War; Marshal Foch, generalissimo of the Allied armies, have deserved well of their country." It cost some money to engrave this decree on the school-walls of France. And in its simplicity it had a spiritual grandeur surpassing the cash wherewith Britain, by tradition, repaid her war leaders.

Foch appreciated the tribute thus engraved. He was too spiritually minded, too ardent a patriot to miss its significance. But while knowing that "man does not live by bread alone," he knew the value of bread. That instinct was deep-rooted in heredity, family and racial. When he heard that Rumania had granted General Berthelot an estate in recognition of his war services there, Foch remarked: "Good! Very good! That's a fine gesture! The Rumanians know how to be grateful. . . . A gift like that, a country's recognition of services done: that's worth all the titles of nobility in a family. One leaves one's children something to bear witness to what one has done. . . . An estate, or no matter what—something given in national gratitude: I should have liked that. . . . Gratitude is hard to carry. Democratic governments have no use for it. . . . They don't want to perpetuate anything. . . . And yet a house—some sort of hut, even—a national gift! . . . They turned to us in desperate straits. . . . And now!" His suggestion that any form of recognition would satisfy him equally does not ring true. For he had in abundance those trinket-symbols that other men covet, and that many covet above everything. He was a true Frenchman of the soil. His conclusion shows it. An acre of his own meant more to him than any decoration. It was the assurance of endurance, the patch of earth in which the soul could take root and bear seed.

But for Foch any personal grievances were submerged by his greater dissatisfaction over the omission to secure the Rhine frontier. As 1919 drew towards its close events seemed to be fulfilling his foreboding. The refusal of the American Congress to ratify the Peace Treaty, involving the lapse of the defensive

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pact, was greeted by him as quick justification for his original distrust of any intangible guarantee. He had, incidentally, been upset already by Pershing's firm resistance to his efforts to gain a French foothold in the American bridgehead at Coblenz, a design inspired by the idea of fostering the Separatist movement and by the delusion that the population was French in sympathy. Pershing threatened to recommend the withdrawal of the American troops from the Rhine if Foch insisted. General Allen, the American commander at Coblenz, notes significantly in his diary of Foch's visit to Coblenz the following spring that, although otherwise genial, "he expressed no desire to see Pershing, when I told him he might come this year, nor did he request to be remembered to him."

The chief source of uneasiness for Foch, however, was the tardiness of the Germans in fulfilling the Peace Treaty. While convinced that they were evading the disarmament clauses, despite his unremitting supervision, he felt that the Allies were disarming themselves so fast that he was losing the power to compel German fulfilment. At the beginning of 1920 the Allied Governments set up the "Allied Military Committee of Versailles" as an organ to deal with the military side of the problem, its executive limbs being the military commission of control in Germany and the armies of occupation. Foch was appointed to preside over this committee. But its effect was really to curtail his powers, for he was merely president of a committee, and that committee was subordinate to a new higher organ of control—the Ambassadors' Conference.

Nevertheless, even though cramped by this diplomatic check, the task of supervising German disarmament proved less disappointing than the wider issues on which he was consulted. In January he laid before the Supreme Council a plan for forming an anti-Bolshevik combination of all the states from Finland to the Black Sea, but failed to carry conviction. This and other hesitations upon the part of the Allied statesmen in dealing with the European tangle led him to make the bitter comment: "They break everything, they crack everywhere." He declared that he could not carry on much longer with such men. Although Clemenceau had fallen from power, overturned by the

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general wave of discontent in France, Foch found still less satisfaction in the succeeding Government. His own solutions would have been simple and forceful, and he could not understand why the statesmen did not apply them.

He summed up the San Remo Conference in April as "*la politique à deux sous*," which was with him a favourite expression of contempt. His characterisations of individual statesmen were equally caustic and vivid. Of one he remarked: "He's a coward in a rage"; of another: "He's a peacock; he has all its pride and futility!"; of a third: "He's an eel . . . he slips away like macaroni!" Poincaré was almost the only political name missing from Foch's catalogue of contempt.

He had shared Foch's views of the Peace Treaty, although he had shown more discretion in proclaiming it. But in February, 1920, when receiving Foch into membership of the French Academy, he said, with scarcely veiled meaning: "It was your task to make war; it was not for you to make the peace. You have, however, the right to say what form, in your opinion, the peace should take that it may best prevent the renewal of the war." "Let us hope that the world will never have cause to repent that it only followed your counsel incompletely." To Foch fell the academician's chair once occupied by Marshal Villars. And it was testimony to Foch's self-restraint that in pronouncing a eulogy of Villars he did not refer to the fact that to the victor of Denain was entrusted the task of negotiating the peace that closed the war of the Spanish Succession. Perhaps Foch felt that in such an assembly the point would be caught without emphasis, especially after Poincaré's words.

Foch always admired Poincaré. Yet even of this most unbending of statesmen Foch could complain, later: "He has no notion of the strength of his position in the country. I am constantly telling him that he can do what he wills. The essential is for him to will." Foch's regretful reflection may seem somewhat amusing to an historian of foreign relations.

For Lloyd George, Foch's feeling was mixed. In October, 1919, Foch replied to his birthday greetings: "I do not forget that it is to your insistence that I owe the post I now occupy"—much to Clemenceau's indignation. But a few months later

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Foch declared: "He changes his mind as easily as he changes his shirt. More often if anything. Shirts can always be turned inside out." The further the war receded the more strongly Foch came to regard Lloyd George as the chief enemy of France. Two years later Foch would say: "I am greatly astonished that England allows . . . such a man, so devoid of all the qualities most appreciated by the English . . . to shape the destiny of so great a nation. . . . If he were given his own way he would drag England straight to Bolshevism. Not only England, but the whole of Europe."

The external danger from Bolshevism came to a head in July, 1920, when the Bolshevik armies took the offensive against the Poles, who had advanced far into Russian territory. The crisis developed while Foch was attending an Allied Conference at Spa. Foch had little belief in the cohesion of the newly created State or in its military power of resistance, but he opposed the suggestion that the Poles should be pressed to withdraw to their own frontier, arguing that such a retirement would ruin the morale of their Army. The retirement, however, soon took place—under the pressure of the Bolshevik armies. In forty days they would compel the Poles to retreat four hundred miles. At an Allied meeting on July 16th, Lloyd George asked if Foch would go out to Poland and steady the situation. Foch showed no eagerness to accept this vague rôle unless he had a free hand and full assurance that the Polish Government would fulfil his conditions. He considered that it was no use pouring arms into Poland unless and until real leadership was assured there. The French Prime Minister, Millerand, supported him, and Wilson argued that "it would never do to risk the priceless asset of Foch's name in a wild schémé of this sort." In the outcome Foch was sent by proxy.

For, when a few days later it was decided to dispatch an Anglo-French Mission to Poland, Foch said to Millerand: "Send Weygand there first. He will do everything that I should do. . . . And later, if that is not enough, there will still be time for me to go myself." But in fact there would scarcely have been. By August 13th the Russian armies, pressing ceaselessly on, were at the gates of Warsaw, and its fall seemed certain. Weygand's

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account of his reception by the Poles was calculated to deter Foch from coming. For although Weygand gradually penetrated the outer wall of prejudice with which the Polish leaders shut themselves off from Allied advice, he could make no impression on the central keep, Marshal Pilsudski, the Chief of the State.

This "sombre genius," to use Lord d'Abernon's description, had so strong a distrust of orthodox soldiers and methods that he virtually ignored the presence of the Allied Mission, saying that the only aid he desired was material supplies, not advice. Meantime he matured his plan in secrecy. Spreading out his troops rather than concentrating them, he deliberately exposed his vital points, and then left Warsaw, to lead a small picked force at hurtling pace across the rear of the exultant Russian armies. The swift and unexpected menace produced as sudden a collapse, and the Bolshevik armies flowed back from Warsaw in a disordered reflux.

If Weygand was, justly, disgusted with his treatment, Foch was contented with the result. For, as he was never tired of repeating, "results alone count." "I said, 'Send him and you will see!' And you have seen! We were the emergency repairers. Wherever things were going badly, in Italy, France, Poland, we went. We were familiar with desperate situations. Nothing is easier. We arrive, see what is required. We give orders. We take determined steps. We stick to them and succeed."

On the eve of the dramatic reversal at Warsaw Foch had accompanied Millerand to England, where he showed angry disgust at Lloyd George's efforts to arrange a truce between the Bolsheviks and the Poles, and apparent sympathy for the former. But when, in misplaced confidence, the Bolsheviks rejected Lloyd George's truce proposals, Foch was unable to suggest any counter-measures more effective than those of persuading the Baltic states to assist Poland and of sending some help to Wrangel's "white" army. This sense of powerlessness was the more trying because of his fear that the Bolsheviks, swamping Poland, would make contact with the Germans. Hence his relief when the Polish counterstroke turned the tide.

It enabled him to devote his attention more fully to the

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Rhineland and the task of ensuring Germany's disarmament. Both the American and the British commanders in the occupied territory seem to have felt that his influence was exerted in favour of a too military attitude rather than in promoting the recovery of industry and a peaceful atmosphere. He, on the other hand, considered that his Allies were too prone to pander to those who had laid waste his own soil. Although his relations with Allen were smoother than with Pershing formerly, he remarked, shortly before the American withdrawal, that Allen "was acting under orders from Berlin."

Yet, although grieved by the policy of those who had fought alongside France in the war, Foch showed a fine capacity to distinguish between political and personal relations, and to remember the claims of comradeship when others were forgetting them. When, in the spring of 1921, the miners' strike threatened to spread, Wilson was forced to withdraw British battalions from the occupied and plebiscite areas abroad; Foch generously accepted the necessity, saying that as "Henri was in danger," he could withdraw whatever troops were needed for the emergency. Wilson's diary has the further note: "And he added that any mortal thing he could do to help me he would, and I had only to ask him. What a splendid old man he is, and what a loyal comrade!"

Foch's feeling towards England would seem to have been that of a paternal, and somewhat patronising, affection for a child that has gone astray. This attitude comes out especially in the record of a conversation later in the year with Wilson, who had been discoursing on and characteristically blackening Britain's troubles at home and abroad. Foch ever and anon exclaimed, "*Pauvre Angleterre, pauvre Angleterre,*" and then sadly declared: "You break your written word. You cower under the assassin and the Jew. Your friendship is no longer worth seeking. We must go elsewhere." This was certainly an extreme example of the frankness of a friend. It must be remembered that Foch's view of England was inevitably coloured by that of his Irish friend. They shared, too, a growing antipathy towards the Welsh Prime Minister, as well as the tendency of all politically-minded soldiers to regard all civil politicians as inherently base.

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Towards the end of 1921, moreover, Foch was feeling the strain of his labours and disappointments. And that October he reached his seventieth birthday. A few weeks later he sailed on a visit to the United States at the invitation of the American Legion. Although he travelled far and wide during his two months' tour, the enthusiasm of his hosts counteracted the physical tax, and the trip served as a strong mental refreshment to him. Above all, his contact with the actively expressed desire to "get things done," by touching a sympathetic chord, acted as a rejuvenating gland. "Look at the young Americans; they are vigorous, physically and morally." "If they do not know, they learn, they make their way. One can only succeed by willing to."

He was impressed, too, by the American theory of government, which "combines the two essential principles of good government: authority and liberty." Satisfied that the principle underlying the constitution was sound, he did not pay much heed to suggestions that it did not work out impeccably in practice. His contact with America at home, together with his perception of its diversity in immensity, reacted on his own outlook. Henceforward his spirit of philosophical resignation would become more marked. "The conduct of nations is determined by deep-seated motives on which reasoning has no effect. They are as they are, as geographical and historical factors have formed them, and you will not change them. England can be explained by her insulated position; America by her isolation and her almost total ignorance of Continental affairs."

His deepened appreciation of this basic fact, following on his past experience, helped him to avoid the pitfall of propaganda. In dealing with Americans he remarked that if one attempted argumentative conversion "they will immediately become all prickles, like the hedgehog." "The best way of convincing them is to seem to avoid all efforts in that direction." He certainly showed discretion during his tour, if he did not fulfil his own advice to "be concrete," for he confined his addresses to an effulgent expression of gratitude, a general appeal for the continuation of war comradeship, and an exhortation to effort.

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He was careful to avoid any emphasis on his own chief effort, that towards obtaining the Rhine frontier. Here his philosophy came to the aid of his restraint. It was no use wishing for, or willing, the unobtainable. "I uphold the Versailles Treaty. It is a minimum." Such bitterness as remained was reserved for those Frenchmen who had yielded in the struggle for the maximum. Thus, when Clemenceau followed him on a visit to America, Foch commented, in an interview given to the *New York Tribune*: "Clemenceau is going over there to whimper and sentimentalise like the old dotard he is. . . . Clemenceau has lost the peace. His apologia would have but little success in France; he is hoping to have more success with it in the United States. He is going over to say to the Americans: 'You are really very naughty. Why have you not ratified my treaty?' . . . If I could give him a piece of advice I would say to him, 'Stay at home!'"

The extension given to Foch's philosophy by his American holiday would be reflected in his forbearance towards the older Ally after his return. It was the more notable because it came at a time of increased friction, when most of his own countrymen reached the climax of irritation against Britain. Few of them would have shared his view in May, 1922: "I am very optimistic as to Franco-British relations. Men may commit foolish acts on both sides of the Channel, but the friendship, the union of the two peoples rest on foundations too solid for individual errors to shake them." When certain French statesmen referred acidly to Britain's attitude in their speeches, Foch's comment was: "What use are these oratorical manifestations? Platform diplomacy is bad diplomacy. Nations are set one against another. . . . And then nothing. . . ." On May 11th he met King George, who was visiting the war graves in France, and had come to lay a wreath in the French cemetery at Notre Dame de Lorette. The King was accompanied by Haig, whose post-war feelings towards Foch were known to be somewhat cold. It is reported that when the two exchanged greetings, the King took their clasped hands in his, and said: "Always good friends, is it not so?" Foch replied: "Always friends, Sire, for the same reasons and the same cause." Three months later Foch

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would give and receive fresh testimony of sympathy when he travelled to attend the funeral of his murdered friend, Sir Henry Wilson.

A year later, at a time of even greater friction, Foch went to the unveiling of a memorial to the fallen at Abbeville, and there met Lord Cavan, Wilson's successor as Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Taking Cavan's arm, and pointing to the memorial, Foch said: "Let us show our dead that we are united."

Foch's increased readiness to accept with equanimity the cross-currents of British and French policy may partly be traced to his satisfaction at the advent to power of Poincaré, who, he felt, would preserve French interests with the minimum of concession. And Britain's absence of support mattered less now that, in his opinion, Germany was "in a material and moral state that will not allow her to cherish, for a long time, the idea of a war of revenge. That is the essential point. Our security is assured for an indefinite period."

The one problem now, he considered, was to squeeze payment of reparations out of Germany. Towards her his attitude was unchanged and unrelenting. Germany, in his view, was the leopard that could not change its spots. When in 1924, his old opponent Ludendorff was being tried at Munich for his share in Hitler's revolt, Foch found fresh support for his opinion in the account of the trial. "It throws a curious light on a horrible world of Boches outvying each other in betrayals and abuse. They remind me of a basketful of crabs biting and tearing each other limb from limb."

He doubted whether the Republic would endure, and, even if it did, whether it would "modify the German mentality." Germany, to him, was a body permeated with the "intellectual and ethical poison of a Prussian philosophy of superiority which absolved the powerful from conforming to morality." In default of the Rhine frontier, Germany's weakness seemed to him the one guarantee of France's security. Hence she ought to be kept weak.

But if his view of Germany was unchanging, his sense of what was practicable grew more sure as he grew older. He had

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learnt to answer his favourite question—" *De quoi s'agit-il ?* "—in a spirit of calculation, not of abandon. When, in 1922, Germany's failure to fulfil the reparation clauses led exasperated French politicians to suggest a march on Berlin, Foch pointed to the map, pointing out that the distance from the Rhine to Berlin was greater than from Paris to the Rhine. "Do you understand exactly what that means?" While he had no doubt of his ability to reach Berlin, he would need strong forces to guard his communications, and this would involve the calling up of two or three new classes in France. "Have you calculated the disastrous effect that this mobilisation would produce in our country, which has already suffered fifty-two months of war?" What impression would it make in England, America, and all the neutral countries which "already suspect us of a Chauvinistic and imperialistic spirit"? And even when Berlin was occupied, "what concrete advantages would you reap?" The German Government would probably imitate, even though in a modified form, the example of the Russians in 1812. "Are we to renew Napoleon's errors and follies?" His arguments quenched such dreams.

But at the end of 1922 Germany's statement of inability to fulfil her immediate obligations gave an impetus to the French idea of seizing "productive pledges." When the Reparations Commission, against the vote of the British member, declared Germany in voluntary default over her coal and timber deliveries, Poincaré's Government decided to apply the sanctions provided for in the treaty and occupy the Ruhr. Although Foch had no moral objections to this step, he questioned the practical value and necessity of occupying the whole district. His own plan, framed in November, had been to occupy a more limited strip as far as Essen, sufficient to yield the coal that was required. "The Government wanted to swallow everything at one gulp. Consequently we choked and could not digest it."

Nevertheless, although concerned at the Government's precipitation, he had been for a time more optimistic than the result warranted. When difficulties began, Weygand was dispatched to the Ruhr by the Government. Foch commented: "Good! Once more we are sent to patch up things." And a few days

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later he remarked: "The battle is ended." But in fact it was not. His doubts had been based on the material and military difficulties of such an enlarged occupation. These were soon overcome. But the real difficulty would be moral—the passive resistance offered by the German mining population supported by their Government. The limitations of force were exposed. If resistance was ultimately broken down after a grim eight months' struggle, through the exhaustion of German finances, the outward success was bought at a tremendous cost, to France as well as to Germany. The collapse of the mark would be followed by the fall of the franc, while France would not enjoy the redeeming advantages which Germany gained by going into bankruptcy.

Foch ascribed these consequences to lack of any clear plan applied consistently. The politicians were unequal to their task, but their inadequacy was the fruit of the political system. In his opinion, the crux of the problem lay in a reform of the constitution so as to ensure more continuity of office, and to dissociate administration as far as possible from the fluctuations of politics. Yet, as an observer of the falling franc, his faith was as characteristic and unshaken as during the war. "Unless we are cowards or lunatics, the franc can never suffer the fate of the mark." He trusted to will and counted on work, pointing to the high proportion of Frenchmen who had a stake in the soil and to the fact that France was self-sufficing. His faith would be justified.

But he would continue to insist on the need for a new constitutional foundation, and of building policy on a settled theory adapted to the new conditions of Europe. "We are building on old foundations. It is like fixing an engine on to a stage-coach. You will not make a motor-car in that way."

By 1926 he was even holding up Germany as an object-lesson to the politicians, and telling Briand: "Germany will soon teach France how a country can progress with a republican constitution. The lesson is unexpected and paradoxical, but I assure you that it will be given." But his growing respect for the German Republic, and his inclination to believe that for the present its aim was economic rather than military, did not

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weaken his conviction that Germany would again be a menace.

His scepticism towards the League of Nations was unchanged, and he lost few chances of ridiculing the debates at Geneva. Towards the Locarno pacts he was more tolerant. "They allow Europe to enjoy a lull, and above all, they give the young nations, born of our victory, time to consolidate themselves."

He often spoke ardently of peace. "No one wants any longer this abominable thing which the war was." "No more wars; it is too dreadful." But his idea of ensuring peace was unalterably based on military guarantees. "I am on the side of the peacemakers, but not of the pacifists." "We must foresee and make preparations for the moment when we evacuate the Rhine." One step on which he insisted was that "of providing powerful fortifications" along the frontier to replace the natural obstacles which did not exist. But a greater assurance would be by the union of potential forces. He had been compelled to forgo the frontier which he desired; in default of it he would do all in his power to enclose the one country of potential menace with a ring fence of armies allied to France. Hence the visits which he paid to the countries of the Little Entente, and the paternal eye with which he watched their consolidation. "Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugo-Slavia. . . . You will be astonished by their development and progress. Only they must have time and peace."

"Poland? In 1918 I had declared that it was a myth. . . . I have now entirely changed my mind. It is a nation which has a vitality and a strength which I admire. They have been able to drive the Germans out of their country, from Posnania, absolutely and completely. And then they have children, swarms of children." The Czech nation, too, had given sure proof of its force and vitality. It had found good leaders and had shown "the great wisdom to leave them continuously in power." "A nation capable of such orderliness can certainly hope for a great destiny."

Closer ties with France's new allies, the preservation as far as possible of the ties with her old allies—these ideas formed the main planks of Foch's platform. They rested on the idea of keeping Germany permanently powerless. He would have felt

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more secure if the frontiers of the new countries had been "determined by considerations of strategy." They were too irregular and intertwined with each other. Some people might think that this vulnerability would make for hesitation in risking war; he felt that only a strong barrier could shelter the spirit of peace from withering gusts. What a pity that "there were more politicians than generals on the council that remodelled Europe" !

As the years passed he had more time to reflect on policy, because he had less to do. But his routine was unvarying, save during his decreasingly frequent absences from Paris. At half-past nine each morning he would arrive at his office, 8 bis, Boulevard des Invalides, one of the long, low-built annexes which flank the great dome of Napoleon's resting-place. Punctuality was still so firm a trait that if delayed in arrival or leaving early he would almost apologetically explain the reason. A crisp greeting to his two aides-de-camp, and he would pass into his large, barely furnished room, its walls covered with maps and ornamented only by the flag he had borne as Allied Commander-in-Chief. A pause in front of the barometer after hanging up his hat and cloak, in winter also a glance at the thermometer, and then a quick step to his table, where books and files formed a barricade round the large blotting-pad, beside which stood in orderly array his working materials—pens, pencils, pipes, and paper packet of tobacco. Before looking at the neatly stacked letters, he would wipe his nickel-plated eyeglasses, which hung by a black thread. He opened all his letters himself. After reading a few lines, he would glance at the signature before scanning the letter for its real point. If they were merely baits for an autograph: "Do we know him? No! To the wastepaper basket!" If they opened with magniloquent flattery: "Boum! Boum! Here comes the big drum!" If they came from associations of ex-service men they received specially sympathetic attention and a ready response unless they wanted something more than the patronage of his name. In that case: "If we once begin to do this, we shall never be able to stop."

His orderly officers stand close on his right, taught by experience to be careful in catching the exact indications of how he

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wishes each reply to be phrased. "What's this? 'I have taken great interest in reading this book!' No, no! I have not read it. Always tell the truth. Write, please, 'I expect to find great interest in reading it.'"

Another letter might contain a request that he would write a preface: "Prefaces? They bore me!" is his usual comment. When he wrote one for the published diaries of Sir Henry Wilson, he spent weeks on the task. For his habit of polishing and repolishing grew more intense as he grew older. And it formed a curious contrast to his speech, so disjointed and yet so pointed. "Perhaps I did say that. It is more or less what I think. But, if I had to put my signature to it, I should insist on revising it. . . . It is only what I put in writing that counts." The historian will demur. For a Foch portrayed through his written words would be as lifeless and as opaque as his own death-mask.

His letters at last dealt with, the orderly officers would be released by the set phrase: "Tell General Weygand that I am in." With Weygand's entry, bearing the official correspondence, discussion of the more serious problems would begin. Despite the intimacy between the two, Weygand always maintained an air of disciplined subordination, continuing to stand even when Foch left his desk to lean back on the sofa, pipe in mouth, and putting forward deferentially the analysis of the problem he had already made.

After Weygand would come those for whom appointments had been arranged, the daily drops that made up a stream of visitors as diverse as it was distinguished. Then, punctually at ten minutes past twelve, Foch would leave, by car if some ceremony had called on him to don uniform, but usually on foot. The short walk to his home in the Rue de Grenelle was always a pleasure, and as an exercise the more vigorous because of his tendency to dive across the street at a run through a gap in the traffic. Another form of exercise came from the constant need to answer salutes, for, despite his civilian clothes, relieved only by the buttonhole ribbon of the Military Medal, he was constantly recognised.

The ordeal was light, however, compared with the ceremonial duties that filled the post-war years. These were the inevitable

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penalty of the unique pinnacle of fame and position that he had attained. "I am a mere parcel. I let them pack me up. They exhibit me, then store me away again. I do not concern myself with anything." He was too much a soldier, too strongly imbued with the sense of such duty, to shirk the requirements of serving as puppet-in-chief at endless reviews, medal presentations, unveilings, and receptions. Happily for him, repetition did not dull his inward response to the thrill of mass enthusiasm, even though his features donned automatically a martial cloak of immobility. And in unveiling a war memorial or presenting a decoration for valour his emotion could still find renewal because, as he said: "I live in the memory of a past which is always present to my eyes."

This was the more inevitable because his house in the Rue de Grenelle, assigned to him as a residence by the Government, was a museum in miniature, crowded with war trophies and commemorative tributes from French cities and Allied countries. The eye of the reflecting visitor might rest on certain medals representing Louis XIV at the conquest of the Rhine; on paintings of the Cathedrals of Laon and Reims, suggestive of Foch's consciousness of fighting to guard not only his country but his religion; on the resplendent gifts of kings intermixed with bourgeois heirlooms that had once decorated his childhood home at Valentine. His bookcases also, none too spacious, had their tale to tell: with Thiers' *Consulate and the Empire* still holding a place of prominence; with much-annotated volumes of Clausewitz, Bernhardt and Moltke's correspondence; with sufficient volumes of plays as to suggest Foch's fondness for the theatre; with a marked absence of novels and poetry. The observer could note a fair proportion of the French classics, Corneille the most thumbed, and some translations from the English; but German and Scandinavian literature Foch found "disquieting and nebulous." As for the history of the war, Foch preferred to contemplate it in the trophies which surrounded him rather than in literary records.

Foch found more change and more relief from the memory of the past when he went to Treufeunteuniou, where he spent his holidays surrounded by his seven young grandchildren.

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Part of the time he worked at his *Memoirs*, striving after a laborious exactitude of phrase which partly accounts for his failure to complete them, and for their inexactitude as history. If he had spent more time in pursuing facts, and less in polishing phrases, his narrative might have attained greater precision and truer proportion. He also lacked time, however, because in his last lap of life he turned to write a study of Joan of Arc—a task of more appeal to him than research into contemporary records. The subject was made for him, and he for the subject. Instead of a dull exploration of facts, it could be explained by an inward light.

But it was not to literary labours that he devoted most of his time, nor in them that he found most satisfaction. Even in the mornings he would break off to walk round his small estate, pruning-scissors in hand, and in nothing did he find such true contentment. When asked by friends in Paris how he spent his time at Treufeunteuniou he answered: "I plan strategy with my trees." There, in another form, he could repeat his action at Ypres, looking for spots where trees might be planted to bar the path of the wind-gusts that blew from the nearby sea. For many years shooting had been his chief recreation and delight, but he had now given it up: "Peace to the partridges!" Constructive effort, the satisfaction of doing something that should endure, such was now his absorbing thought. It became all the stronger after his visit to Morocco, and in paying tribute to Lyautey's work he showed a noble envy. If he himself had helped to preserve old France, Lyautey was creating a new France. "Ah! If I were twenty I would go to Morocco; there is something there to work for. . . . If I had my life to live all over again, I should not trouble about words, I should go where the deeds are done, and you would see the results." On his small estate in Brittany he could at least aim to be a Lyautey in miniature, so that in his last lap of life he might leave seed in the soil. "I should like to leave, after my death, things that are solid and enduring." Hence his passion for trees, mystically intensified because to him they instinctively suggested the vaulting pillars of a Gothic cathedral.

His arboricultural passion expressed itself characteristically in

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the form that gave most outlet for his urge to vigorous action. Weygand, who after the war had bought a house close by, once remarked with affectionate humour: "As soon as the Marshal arrives he grabs his pruning-scissors and mercilessly cuts off all that is 'pruneable.' When there is nothing left to cut, he goes away."

But every August Foch broke off his holiday and went away for another cause—to make his annual pilgrimage to the Belgian frontier. There he would uncover and kneel in prayer, motionless, save for a shaking of the head, before a wooden cross that bore the legend: "Germain Foch, Subaltern of the 131st Infantry, killed at Gorcy, August 22nd, 1914." In that grave his own name was buried. But at Treuveunteuniou, whence he had come, there was a sevenfold guarantee that his seed would endure.

His own strength was failing, the brave heart flagging. He had already suffered warnings when, in January, 1928, after going to Nice to unveil a memorial, news came of Haig's sudden death. Unhesitatingly, he abandoned his intention to rest a while in the Riviera sunshine, and set out on the long journey to London. A bad crossing was followed by the strain of the funeral ceremonies. On his return Foch showed the effects. In July he went to the unveiling by Poincaré of his own statue on the hill of Cassel. His tiredness was noticeable; his skin had a leaden tinge. In November at the unveiling of the Marne memorial his failing health was as marked as his unfaltering spirit.

Then, in the night of January 13th, 1929, he was stricken by a heart attack. His doctors were relieved when dawn came and found him still alive. The crisis was the beginning of a two months' battle, a struggle so prolonged as to be reminiscent of the type of war which he had waged. And in this last battle the power of his will was greater than ever before. Complications intervened, but he fought through them, was felled anew only to recover afresh. He gained ground so far as to leave his bed. If he fought so hard for life, it was not from fear of death. "It has to be faced some day. The chief thing is to be prepared for it. One should not be alarmed by the thought

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of it." He was ready to go, but would not go as if yielding.

On March 20th he spent part of the day in his chair. As the winter sun was sinking and he was about to return to bed, a fresh heart attack struck him. His characteristic remark "*Allons-y !*" this time sounded as a trumpet-call for his last charge. Other men might surrender to death; he would launch himself into its arms with colours flying.

On Palm Sunday, three days later, his body was carried to lie alongside the "Unknown Soldier" beneath the Arc de Triomphe. At evening it was borne to Notre Dame. On the Tuesday it was laid in a vault beside Napoleon's grave under the great dome of the Invalides. There most appropriately the mind as well as the body of Foch might rest. But the spirit of Foch had gone to mount guard over the humbler shrines of the Maid.

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IN the enthusiasm of victory the name of Ferdinand Foch was inscribed on the brief roll of the Great Captains of history. Will it remain there? Or will it be erased by the friction of facts gradually collected and collated in the service of history? The answer will depend not merely on the resistance which a man's reputation offers to these hard rubs, but on the question whether truth can overtake the swiftly writing hand of legend—the supreme duplicator.

Here it is for us only to discuss the first condition, and to trace the outlines of the historical Foch. That it does not fit the outlines of the pre-Napoleonic Great Captains is obvious. They were essentially men who by their art multiplied the effect of slender resources. They gained their ends through ruse and stratagem executed with a finesse that Foch the professor was far from holding up to admiration. And those ends were gained in a type of war that Foch as the pupil of Clausewitz despised the more because he unhistorically assumed it to be utterly different, not merely from the modern condition but from the eternal ideal.

It is thus with Napoleon alone—as Foch would have wished—that his practice may be compared. In the first flush of rapture over the stubborn enemy's collapse Foch was hailed not only as almost the peer of Napoleon but as his double. It was proclaimed that Foch had reproduced in a modern setting the strategic method of Napoleon. In the cold, clear light of history the differences are seen to be more marked than the similarities.

The difference in conditions formed a primary hindrance to any reproduction. For the weight of numbers and the artificial power of defence cramped manœuvre and obstructed those dazzling combinations in time and space which are the life-blood of Napoleon's art, clogging the arteries worse than in Napoleon's own later campaigns. It is true that the mechanical mobility brought by the advent of the railway and the road-motor helped

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to restore the circulation, but it helped the defending side even more in repairing the consequences of a local collapse. In these conditions something more was needed to offset and upset the superiority which defence had gained by the development of field fortification and the machine-gun.

That supplementary key might have been obtained by study of the great Captains preceding Napoleon. For they had waged war in an era when the defensive had the ascendancy, and when offensive manoeuvre was cramped both by the strength of defensive aids and by the dependence of armies on an elaborate system of supply. The difference between their warfare and Napoleonic warfare was due not—as Foch in his simplicity imagined—to a deficiency of will among them, but to a surplus of obstacles in their path. If they overcame such obstacles sooner and more effectively than did Foch in 1914–18 it was by their ceaseless research for surprise and by their skill in creating opportunities through a deceptive yielding which lured their opponents into pitfalls. They had not measured success in acreage nor counted as irretrievable shame the purposeful abandonment of “a yard of ground.”

Even more than in their wars, the successful moves of 1914–18 would take a defensive-offensive form, and be the product of a riposte following upon a relapse. Yet that form was unpremeditated and undesired, and the advantage, paradoxically, provided in spite of the generals. Where the Great Captains had bent conditions to their advantage, their professional successors did no more than seize opportunities, sometimes.

A growing opportunism is certainly the mark of Foch, as it has been of many famous generals who have learnt by hard experience to discard pedantic “principles,” and thereby have come through tribulation to a triumphal issue. In Foch this opportunism is the more noteworthy, as well as the more creditable, because of the fixity of his original theory and because he had so long been a professor. What a gulf there was between his pre-war conception of “a single supreme stroke on one point” and his post-war declaration that “Victory is won by bits and scraps”! In bridging it he was helped by a philosophy expressed by the phrase he often quoted: “*A chaque jour suffit sa*

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peine." First applied by him in human relations, the proof of its value there, coupled with the rebuffs to his theory of war, led him to apply it more and more to military problems.

Thus was evolved the strategic method of the war's final phase—a method whose virtue lay in a looseness which gave free rein to opportunism. It is loosely defined, and so best expressed in a congratulatory letter which Foch wrote to Haig on August 26th, 1918: "It is this persistent widening and intensifying of the offensive—this pushing vigorously forward on carefully chosen objectives without excessive regard to alignment or close touch—that will give us the best results with the smallest losses, as you have so perfectly understood." The historical analysis of the last "Hundred Days" may have suggested that Foch did not perfectly understand the implication of his new method; that the lingering pressure of the old theory on his mind was apt to tighten his application of the new method. But his thought had travelled far in coming back so far from the idea of single-minded and single-pointed concentration.

That retrogression to wisdom continued when the war was over. For it was Foch himself who delivered the comment: "We experienced some unhappy surprises at the very beginning of hostilities. We had stepped into a hornets' nest, as the saying goes. We then believed that morale alone counted, which is an infantile notion. Only a very primitive sense of strategy would hold that an immediate and thorough attack is the one means of beating the enemy. . . . You concentrate on breaking the line, on the effectiveness of a direct and violent blow—but you never *do* break through. You merely penetrate the surface. Another immediately forms. You will not get results from a single attack—which by itself can do nothing—but from a well-planned, well-executed, well-placed series." If Foch did not identify his share in the original theory, his verdict was none the less a confession.

His habit of speaking in images, of demonstrating his meaning by gestures, was the cast of his mind. It was truly said of him that "when he thinks he sees." And with equal truth it can be said of him that he only thought what he could see. Hence it was only by experience that he could learn and only through

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experience that he modified the picture stamped on his mind by authority during his military adolescence.

Here is a further contrast between Napoleon and Foch: the one came at twenty-six to try a theory born of reason out of a critical mind. The other had to wait until sixty-two to test a theory received from authority in a spirit of faith. Napoleon at St. Helena would confess that he had learnt nothing from twenty years of war that he had not originally known. A comparison of his early with his later campaigns confirms his confession. But it also suggests that experience had clouded the clearness of his original vision. If he forgot more than Foch ever knew, he forgot, whereas Foch learned. The difference may be traced in the last "Hundred Days" of the two men's career in command.

Foch's handicap was that he had to forget so much before he could learn. And the end of his opportunity came before the lesson was complete. He had come to perceive that the single stroke must be replaced by the serial, that concentration must be endowed with variety, that compromise was as inevitable in strategy as in policy. Here the experience of dealing with allies helped him in dealing with the enemy. From his experience he drew the deduction that "it is necessary when one has been repulsed for from four to five days, not to change one's objectives but to give them a new form in the guise of a new operation. Only at this price will you get obedience from men, With his natural *élan* the French soldier, who loves variety, accepts the idea which appears new to him."

The conclusion reveals the extent of Foch's change of outlook, but also its limits. The purpose of variation is not merely to obtain obedience from one's own men but to deprive the opposing commander of the power to frustrate their fulfilment of the order to go forward. And a far-sighted commander does not accept such repeated repulse before introducing a change. Rather does he, in Sherman's famous phrase, aim from the outset to fix the opponent "on the horns of a dilemma."

The deeper truth to which Foch did not penetrate fully is that in war every problem, and every principle, is a duality. Like a coin, it has two faces. Hence the need for compromise

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as a means to reconciliation. This is the natural consequence of the fact that war is an affair of two parties, so imposing the elemental necessity that while hitting one must guard. Its corollary is that, in order to hit with effect, the enemy must be taken off his guard. Effective concentration can only be obtained when the opposing forces are dispersed; and in order to ensure this, one's own forces must be widely distributed. Thus, by an outward paradox, true concentration is the fruit of dispersion. Napoleon realised this when he spoke of holding his army "*réunie*"—although his successors misinterpreted the word as meaning that the army should be massed in a solid block. For, in fact, he distributed his army in a loose grouping, like a wide-flung net, to baffle and entrap his opponent—the army was assembled in potentiality but not in physical contact. To strike with strong effect one must strike at weakness. To destroy the bulk of the enemy's force one must destroy it by fragments. To ensure reaching an objective one must have alternative objectives. An attack that converges on one point must threaten, and be able, to diverge on another. To fulfil a plan, that plan must have branches. Napoleon's "*faire son thème en deux façons*" goes to the root of the matter.

In Foch's progress through experience towards this conception of duality in war he suffered inevitable checks from his preconceptions and his instincts. Hence the frequent contradictions which mark both his utterances and his actions, making him, for all his seeming simplicity, so hard to gauge. By one selection he could be made to appear the wisest of men; by another the most obtuse. The reconciliation of duality is as difficult in Foch as in war. The man who spoke of "no prepossessions" could in the same breath declare that the theory he taught "would not be open to discussion." The man who condemned Moltke for preconceptions was to prove still more subject to them. So, in later years, he would declare, "You all know how I hate blinkers. One must not have an exclusively military outlook"—and yet scornfully dismiss all that touched upon politics or literature with the retort: "Leave that alone; it is not in my province." Or again, he could proclaim the importance of being receptive to new ideas, and yet be known to

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reject them when proffered with the sweeping phrase and gesture: "I will not have anyone thrusting ideas upon me!"

Most influential with his words, Foch valued only deeds. Dealing always in generalities, he constantly insisted on the need to analyse facts. "The facts exist. You must see them. They continue to exist. You will not eliminate them by sentiment. . . . One must be a realist." Yet at another moment he would define his own attitude thus: "Of intention, I always look at the side of success and not of check; I turn my back on the possibilities of disaster, I eliminate the hypothesis of failure." But he often failed to eliminate the fact.

How can we reconcile such a bundle of contradictions? Intellectually it is not possible. Spiritually, it is. We come closest to the truth, and so did Foch, in his remark: "Intellect, criticism—pah! A donkey who has character is more useful." The verdict has the ring of truth, but shows only one face of the coin. Yet in its one-sidedness it is fully true of Foch, and thereby provides yet another contrast between him and Napoleon. For was it not Napoleon who scornfully said of his British foes—the foes who had foiled him—that theirs was an army of lions led by donkeys? Might the criticism have been repeated a century later when that army was led by a Marshal of France? It is at least certain that Napoleon, who so carefully studied all hypotheses, would have been aghast at a strategist who wilfully closed his eyes to any unfavourable hypothesis.

But we should not forget that under such leadership a bid for world-domination was once more foiled. If the cost might have been less, the result at least could not have been more definite. It is possible, even probable, that with more intellect in leadership, victory would have been cheaper. But with less character, defeat would have been more probable than victory. And of that undefeatable character Foch was not only the symbol but the stimulant.

With more exclusive truth than he perhaps intended, Commandant Bugnet has said of Foch that "character was his genius." His was not the character of a strategist. For strategy is primarily intellectual; it demands the examination of both faces of the coin and the calculation of odds. His was not

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even the character of a commander in the Napoleonic sense. For Foch did not exercise command. If he gained the title of Commander-in-Chief, he still in reality remained the co-ordinator. In a singularly clear-sighted mood of reflection he himself later remarked: "I was no more than conductor of an orchestra. . . . A vast orchestra of course . . . say if you like that I beat time well!" The modesty of the description does him the more honour because it exactly fitted the facts. And the metaphor suited him so well that he applied it to his ultimate strategic method: "Has the music stopped? Are we tired of the tune? We must start a new one. Never stop." "The true meaning of the unified command is not to give orders, but to make suggestions. . . . One talks, one discusses, one persuades. . . . One says: 'That is what should be done; it is simple; it is only necessary to will it.'"

If he preferred to persuade rather than to command, it was not only by force of circumstances but by personal inclination, an inclination developed by his professorial experience. But he was the professor of the platform rather than of the laboratory or the seminar. He dealt in images more than in arguments, and appealed to the spirit more than to the reason. In the circumstances it was perhaps the more effective course, for the influence of reason is apt to be crippled during a crisis. A spiritual appeal could more easily jump the barrier of language and the crevasse of sectional interests.

For the task of conductor of the Allied orchestra Foch was fitted not only by his manner, but by his magnetism. If he lacked Napoleon's magnetic power of mass appeal, he replaced it by a gift of personal appeal, a chamber magnetism, which fitted the conditions of command in 1914-18. He emanated authority, if he did not exercise it. Above all he radiated the suggestion of success. After hearing his phrases quoted an eminent neurologist once declared: "The discipline of Foch appears to me a true method of psychotherapy which ought to be applied to the education of children and to the treatment of the sick." This is a perfect valuation of Foch and his influence on the war. For in the crisis of war men are apt to become children even if they do not become nervous invalids. And the further they are behind

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the front, the greater is their predisposition to this condition. Foch became during the war what Coué became after it. The likeness is strengthened by Foch's habit of reiterating simple formulas of suggestion, and is not weakened by his emphasis on will in apparent contrast to Coué. For although Foch spoke continually of the conscious application of will, it is clear that his real suggestion was a subconscious exercise of faith. His will rested on his faith.

In this power of what he termed "will" lies the only comparison between Foch and Napoleon. Yet there is, strictly, no comparison. For Foch excelled Napoleon in this quality just as he was otherwise surpassed in mental qualities. While Napoleon trusted to his star, Foch trusted to his God. "One speaks of genius. Bah! genius doesn't count . . . in the hour of decision, when it became necessary to say the 'yes' on which thousands of lives depended, I was, *and I felt it*, the instrument of the divine Providence."

Because of that self-attested source of Foch's inspiration, no less than because of the nature of his influence, the real comparison of Foch is not with the "Corsican brigand" but with the Maid of Orleans. Each was the symbol and standard-bearer of a great recovery. Each rode on the crest of a wave which swept the invader out of their country. Both were conscious of an impulse that transcended reason. Both had a native shrewdness underlying their devoutness. In the one difference, apart from sex, rests the supreme coincidence—and atonement. For the heirs of the first invader served as the instrument in repelling the second invasion. The Man of Orleans thus, in a dual sense, obtained requital for what the Maid of Orleans had suffered.

But there were other parallels. If the first *Revanche* was inspired by the spirit of the Maid, it was projected through the muzzles of the primitive cannon with which the French shattered the palisade defences of the hitherto secure British archers. Faith may ignore, but reason cannot, the historical importance of this material factor. So in the second *Revanche*, the advent of the primitive tank had a similar effect. There was much truth in General von Zwehl's statement: "It was not the genius of Marshal Foch that defeated us, but General Tank." Foch him-

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self came to recognise the interdependence of moral and material factors. Admitting the folly of the pre-war belief that "morale alone mattered," he said: "War is in itself only a matter of maintaining harmonious proportion between the spiritual and material elements. Fundamentally that is so. If no such proportion is attained, however excellent an army may be it can do nothing against its adversary."

Even so, he omitted to mention the mental element. It is this which ensures the harmonious proportion between the spiritual and material elements. To its deficiency may be traced the duration and cost of the war. But it is none the less true that the spirit of Marshal Foch and the body of General Tank were alike necessary for victory.

Strategically, Foch was most handicapped because he was too single-minded. He had derived this outlook from Clausewitz, if the tendency was inherent in his religious spirit. Gradually, experience brought him to perceive the duality inherent in war, and the consequence was seen not only in his approval of the supplementary Balkan moves but in his own development of alternate blows. Even so, his tendency to press each too long and his reluctance to devise alternatives are proof that his vision was dim.

Spiritually, Foch's single-mindedness was his strength. Because men in war are irrational, because in time of fear they prefer false assurance to disturbing fact, Foch could exert this strength to valuable effect. Although he suffered from delusions, those delusions brought gain as well as loss to others. While his power of self-delusion caused the sacrifice of lives, his power in deluding others helped to prevent the sacrifice of nations. In the council of war as in the classroom he was convincing because he was passionately convinced. The more general he was, the better his effect as a general, and the less harm he caused to offset his heartening influence. The higher he rose, the easier was it for him to preserve this air of indefinite confidence—and indefiniteness was always natural to him.

Its supreme vindication came in the spring of 1918. Beneath the surface the seeds of destiny were approaching fruition—with the inevitable increment of America's resources and the ex-

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haustion of Germany's. But when spring came the green shoots could not be seen. They would ultimately determine the issue. But, in surviving the crisis, faith counted for more than facts. Only by faith could the reapers endure until the harvest was ripe.

During those dark days the faith of Foch was influential; but the faith in Foch was vital. The man himself was above all a medium—the medium through whom the promise of salvation came. Historical analysis may show, does show, that the Supreme Command was little more than a name. At the time, however, men believed it to be a reality. Especially those who mattered most—the men who fought.

The Allied higher commanders might soon discern the limitations of a Supreme Command among equal nations; the statesmen might be disillusioned as to the potency of their own panacea. But as the fighting troops assumed it to be a reality, its effect on them was real. That effect was perhaps greatest where it was most needed—in the hard-trying British Army, which bore the first and heaviest shocks.

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the news of Foch's appointment had a direct effect on the men in the ranks, for the names of their higher commanders rarely meant much to them, even when known to them, in the war of military mass production that was waged on the Western Front. But the news had an unmistakable effect on the regimental officers, most of them quondam civilians. Too remote from the brain-cells of the military hierarchy for true discrimination or exact analysis, their judgment was guided by the sum of general impressions, personal experiences, and concrete results. More ready than the average regular to see the best in their superiors, to exalt any capable commander to the level of a Great Captain, they were slow to renew a confidence once forfeited. Many of them had lost faith in their own higher leadership after Passchendaele and the Cambrai "boomerang." In such a mood the reverses of the spring tended to act as a confirmation of mistrust.

By contrast, the idea that a fresh and superior authority had taken charge was a restorative in itself, while the name of Foch was sufficiently known, if chiefly through the echoes of the Marne legend, to have a heartening sound. The fresh

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confidence thus infused into the body of regimental officers was diffused by them among the men. Thereby fiction had the effect of fact. For faith created facts—those of successful resistance to successive blows.

The result thus to be traced in the national army of Britain was repeated in the nation that stood behind it, as well as in the nations whose troops stood alongside it. If in 1914 Joffre may be described as a national nerve sedative, Foch in 1918 was an international nerve tonic. But he was more—the suggestion of invincibility which became the fact of victory.

APPENDIX

FOCH'S THEORY OF WAR

IN his first book, *Des Principes de la Guerre*, Foch aptly began by asking: "Can war be taught?" Without making an immediate attempt to answer this question, he then asserted that in France it had been taught in an irrational and impractical way prior to 1882-83. His reason, expressed in algebraic formulæ, was that the moral factors had been given a constant value, and only the material factors treated as variables—as the difference between victory and defeat. "The conclusion of the old theory, then, was: in order to conquer, you must have superior numbers, better rifles, better guns, more skilfully chosen positions."

It is curious that Foch should class the last among the material factors. The fact suggests a confusion of thought, or perhaps an omission of thought—to realise the part played by mental factors as the controlling balance between moral and material. This, perchance, may be the reason why his teachings, and later, his practice, seem to swing to the other extreme of underweighing material factors. For, in them, there is little emphasis either on ruse and deception or on superior weapons, as means of gaining the advantage. Thus in bringing out a new set of moral variables, Foch's teaching tends to give material factors a constant value, and does not adequately point out that by taking thought one may give them a higher value. His calculation of the material factors becomes arithmetical, counting numbers without due calculation of the higher yield that may be produced by the application of brain-power.

Having repudiated the material school of thought, Foch turned next to dismiss the argument that "war can only be taught by war." "For that school is not a continuous school at all: it can neither be opened at will, nor kept going for our instruction. It is even insufficient, for it could not prepare us for the first actions (which will also be the most decisive ones) of the next war. . . . It is therefore with a fully equipped mind

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that one ought to start in order to make war and even to understand war."

"The truth is, no study of war is possible on the battlefield; one does there simply what one *can* in order to apply what one *knows*. Therefore, in order to *do* even a little, one has already to *know* a great deal and to know it well." "This principle explains the weakness, in 1866, of the Austrians (whom the war of 1859 ought to have made wiser), as against the Prussians who had not fought since 1815. . . . The first made war without understanding it (as, incidentally, did the French in 1870, although they also had recently been at war). The second had understood war without making it, by means of careful study."

There was much truth in Foch's argument, but it ignored an important material factor, the advantage which the Prussians enjoyed in their breech-loading rifle against the Austrians' muzzle-loader. His illustration, too, took no account of the fact that if the defeated armies had some previous experience of the battlefield, they had far more of the parade-ground, and so might justly be classed as products of peace-time pedantry.

To create a true system, Foch declared, one must "base oneself on *facts*." "With this object in view, let us examine the facts which history gives us. In order to understand this complex phenomenon, war, under the numerous shapes it assumes, let us take those facts one after the other, let us examine them as closely as we can, under a microscope, so to speak; let us resort to microbiology, and let us do this while placing ourselves in the midst of the circumstances under which those facts arose: time, place, temperature, fatigue, numerous depressing causes, misunderstandings, etc., . . . let us consider the questions the actors have had to solve, the company in its zone of action, the battalion in the same way, the brigade, the army corps. . . . Let us discuss the decisions taken, the result obtained, let us treat the question anew. . . . This minute study, as we shall see, has been completed in the case of several local actions. . . . After that we shall come to the *operations*. We have then to consider in detail the functioning of a living and operating army. . . . The teaching of our school has resulted from the sum of such minute studies."

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This minute analysis of historical examples became not merely the system applied at the Ecole de Guerre but in all the military educational centres of the world during the generation before the World War. As here expounded by Foch, the scientific analogy gives it plausibility. But does the analogy itself stand analysis? The book contains detailed studies of one case each from Napoleon's campaigns of 1796, 1806, 1809, and 1815; one case from the war of 1866, and four from that of 1870. They constitute a book impressive in bulk. But would any scientist build a theory on a mere nine observations? We must bear in mind also that he applies his microscope to a case in progress, whereas the military student's microscope is applied only to the uncertain records of a case that is past. The more microscopic his examination the greater is the likelihood, indeed the certainty, of error. One may discover from messages, orders, and from the evidence of witnesses what was being done and thought by the commanders in rear. But to establish the exact action of the individual troop-units in the turmoil of conflict is a work of faith and not of science. We must remember that Foch had never been in battle. Perhaps if he had been, however humble his rôle, he would have come to doubt both the possibility and practical value of recreating the action of the company, battalion, and brigade. He might thus have realised the fundamental fallacy that underlies the microscopic method and his scientific analogy in support of it. The fallacy is the more dangerous because such "minute study" tends to concentrate the attention on the material conditions—weapons, equipment, transport—of a past case which will be different in the future, instead of on the moral factors which Foch set out to emphasise—factors which change in degree but not in kind.

Thus it becomes clear that Foch undertook his analysis of history not to discover principles, but to illustrate principles which were already in his mind. He had received them from authority, not gained them from research. And his task, as he conceived it, was to pass them on to his pupils, using his powers to amplify their meaning.

This attitude comes out clearly in his own explanation. "What is the form of this teaching born from history and

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destined to grow by means of further historical studies ? It came out in the shape of a *theory* of war which can be taught—which will be taught to you—and in the shape of a *doctrine*, which you will be taught to practise. What is meant by these words is the *conception* and the *practical application* not of a *science* of war nor of some limited dogma, composed of abstract truths outside which all would be heresy, but of a certain number of *principles*, the *application* of which, though they will not be open to discussion once they shall have been established, must logically vary according to circumstances, while always tending towards the same goal, and that an objective goal."

"The doctrine will extend itself to the higher side of war, owing to the free development given to your minds by a common habit of seeing, thinking, acting. . . ."

The critical mind finds here a curious series of contradictions. Both the theory and the doctrine will be taught to the student. Dogma is disavowed, although the doctrine consists of a certain number of principles which will not be discussable. Uniformity of thought will produce free development of thought.

These assertions suggest a confusion of thought in the teacher's mind. They can be correlated with religion but not with science. For they have an irresistible reminder of the spectacle of a late-Victorian ecclesiastic making a first tentative effort to reconcile the Book of Genesis with the smattering of science learnt in schooldays.

Foch appears to leave a loophole for the free use of reason when he qualifies the indisputability of the principles with the remark "once they shall have been established." But he is content to follow it with the simple declaration that "there is, then, such a thing as a theory of war. That theory starts from a number of principles :

The principle of economy of forces.

The principle of freedom of action.

The principle of free disposal of forces.

The principle of security, etc. . . ."

The indefiniteness of this list of principles, signalised by the "etcetera," is also apparent in the difficulty of drawing practical distinctions between the second and third. Thus we are not

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surprised to find that the only attempt to define the theory itself is a reference in the next chapter to the "true theory, that of the absolute war which Napoleon had taught Europe." But this is a theory of intention rather than of action.

While still leaving their nature obscure Foch declared that "fixed principles to be applied in a variable way; according to circumstances, to each case which is always a *particular* one and has to be considered in itself; such is our conclusive formula for the time being." But he then went on to say: "Each operation has a *raison d'être*; that is, an object; that object once determined, fixes the nature and value of the means to be resorted to as well as the use which ought to be made of the forces. That object is, in each case, the very answer to the famous question Verdy du Vernois asked himself when he reached the battlefield of Nachod.

"In presence of the difficulties which faced him, he looked into his own memory for an instance or a doctrine that would supply him with a line of conduct. Nothing inspired him. 'Let history and principles,' he said, 'go to the devil! After all, *what must be done?*'"

One feels that Foch himself quotes the question with a sigh of relief, as a means of cutting the knots into which his argument has become tangled, and of escaping from any need to unravel the principles. "What must be done? Once the habit has been acquired of studying and acting thus in numerous concrete cases, the work is done instinctively, automatically, so to speak, and this in consequence of the training the intellect has received." "Such results are again illustrated by another and more commonplace illustration. A wild fowl flies up in front of a sportsman; if it goes from right to left, he fires in front and to the left; if from left to right, he fires in front and to the right; if it comes on him, he fires high; if away from him, he fires low. In each of these cases he applies in a *variable* way the *fixed* principle: to get three points upon one straight line, his eye, the sight and quarry, at the moment the shot takes effect."

One may question whether this simplifying illustration is not too simple to be true. Foch's sportsman is actually applying not a principle but a method, if in a variable way. Such in-

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instinctive action may be the base of sound execution in the heat of battle, but has dangerous limitations in the wider sphere of war, where policy and economics must be considered no less than the use of military force. Reliance on instinct involves the surrender of reason, and it is through reasoned calculation that any plan of war should be conceived. Thus we begin to have a suspicion that Foch was still thinking of war in terms of tactics.

Let us follow the conclusion to which Foch's argument leads. Instinctive action comes from experience, whether that be gained at first hand or in the study. Foch sought to derive his experience from the minute study of historical cases. These cases were obviously and inevitably limited. And the deduction is that the limits of his study represent the limits of his conception of war at the time he taught war. There is nothing to indicate that they had enlarged when he came to make war, although there is evidence of a wider view after he had made war.

Foch's opening chapter on the teaching of war comprises some eight thousand words. To trace any clear ray of thought running through them is difficult, and none the less because of the bright colouring of the panes which give a casual impression of radiance. It is with a sense that the author involved himself in needless confusion and contradictions through excess of verbiage that we come to his second chapter—on the "Primal Characteristics of Modern War."

He begins it with an effort to climb above the plane of tactics, with a desire "to determine the general features of war, in particular its *object* and *means*, the rational way in which the *goal* must be conceived in the France of to-day, so that we may find in that study the foundation of our conduct, that is, of our tactics." The abrupt descent from war policy to tactics, missing out the plane of strategy, is perhaps a significant clue to Foch's thought. He goes on to argue that the form of war should be conceived differently in Paris from Brussels, London, or Madrid. Each country has a different situation and ambitions, which should shape its conception of war. Here we see Foch's practical bent, his *De quoi s'agit-il*. But may not the habit of thinking of war from a strictly French point of view curtail the view of what is best when France forms part of an alliance?

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Foch, however, found a way—although a different way—of reconciling the general and the particular. He declared that there was an *absolute* theory—"that of the absolute war which Napoleon taught Europe." And, while recognising that it might not suit the case of some countries and some periods, he had no doubt that it met the need of modern France. To its neglect he ascribed the defeat of 1870. "To a people in arms, organised for conquest, invasion, a fight to a finish," France had opposed an army that was not drawn from the whole people and an idea of war based on limited, or "diplomatic," objects. "It is because the whole of Europe has now come back to the national thesis, and therefore to armed nations, that we stand compelled to-day to take up again the *absolute* concept of war, as revealed in history."

Foch took this theory of absolute war from Clausewitz, whose interpretation of Napoleon and war guided the general military thought of nineteenth-century Europe. The result of the 1870 war seemed to establish Clausewitz's theory beyond doubt. But did it? There was perhaps a confusion of thought in assuming that an armed nation necessarily meant absolute war. Has there ever been such a thing as absolute war since nations ceased to slaughter or enslave the defeated? Nineteenth-century Europe has passed beyond the Mongol stage. Some of the German military chiefs in 1870 may have thought of that war as Foch suggests, but not so Bismarck, nor even Moltke.

If "absolute war" has any meaning, it is that of a fight until the capacity of one side for further resistance is exhausted. In practice, this may well mean that its opponent is on the verge of exhaustion. In other words, absolute war is a war wherein the conductor does not know when to stop. It implies that the end is pursued regardless of what lies beyond. The conductor allows the fighting instinct to usurp the control of his reason. If this be the logical definition of absolute war we may view St. Helena as the proof that Napoleon was its prophet. And to-day we know only too well where the theory has led us.

Let us now see where the assumption that armed nations must necessarily mean absolute war led Foch. First, it induced him to discard all models, all experience, prior to Napoleon. "We

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cannot draw our inspiration indifferently from Turenne, Condé, Prince Eugène, Villars, or Frederick the Great, even less from the tottering theories and degenerate forms of the last century. The best of these doctrines answered a situation and needs which are no longer ours. Our models, and the facts on which we will base a theory, we must seek in certain definite pages of history, namely from that period of the French Revolution when the whole nation was arming itself for the defence of its dearest interests: Independence, Liberty; from that period of the Empire, when the army born of that violent crisis was taken in hand and led by the greatest military genius that ever was. . . .”

There is a curious inconsistency in the fact that Foch should take Napoleon's campaigns as his model and yet ignore, even while quoting, the opinion of Napoleon that “knowledge of the higher parts of war can only be acquired from experience and from studying the history of the wars of the great commanders. You cannot learn from a grammar how to write a book of the *Iliad*, a tragedy of Corneille.” Napoleon's list of great commanders for study covered the whole course of history since Alexander. Hence it is obvious that he did not recommend a minute study of the details of their campaigns—as those details did not exist—but an attempt to study the general working of their minds. Foch preferred to master “grammar,” and deliberately refrained from a study of all the great commanders save Napoleon and Moltke. Thus his theory of war would inevitably be built on a fragmentary foundation and so might prove of exceptional rather than universal application. An inverted pyramid of great detail would be balanced precariously on a slender apex.

Whilst rejecting a study of the art of war before Napoleon, Foch did not hesitate to criticise it. “To us at this moment of history, in the midst of modern Europe, that old fencing and those antiquated methods are illustrated by a kind of warfare in which there is no decisive solution, nothing but a limited end—a warfare consisting of manœuvres without fighting. . . .” After holding up to reprobation various quotations from eighteenth-century writers, Foch continues: “The same kind of warfare was thus characterised by Marshal de Saxe himself, although a

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man of undeniable ability: 'I am not in favour of giving battle, especially at the outset of a war. I am even convinced that a clever general can wage war his whole life without being compelled to do so.' Entering Saxony in 1806, Napoleon writes to Marshal Soult: 'There is nothing I desire so much as a great battle.' The one wants to avoid battle his whole life; the other demands it at the first opportunity. Further, these theories have the vice of building up magnificent systems on the mere properties and intrinsic value of ground."

There is much point in Foch's concluding criticism that the properties of ground should not be thus overestimated. The generals of the eighteenth century often did so. But at least they did not attain the absurdities of their successors, trained in the new theory, who in 1914-18 proclaimed the capture of a few acres of mud as victories and forbade their troops to give up a yard of such ground, regardless of the cost. This sentence of Foch's makes curious reading in the light of Ypres, 1914 and 1915, and of Artois, 1915.

His comparison of the ideas of Saxe and Napoleon has the defect of its conciseness. Saxe had actually added: "I would not be understood to say that an opportunity of bringing on a general action, in which you have all imaginable reason to expect victory, ought to be neglected; but only to insinuate that it is possible to make war without trusting anything to accident, which is the highest point of skill and perfection within the province of a general."

Saxe was a connoisseur of the art of war, and in setting forth the ideal was obviously employing hyperbole. His own record comprises several great battles, all victories. The exact measure of his thought is to be found, rather, in his admonition: "Decline the attack altogether unless you can make it with advantage." We know that it was not heeded by the generals who were bred in the nineteenth-century school of war. Similarly, Napoleon's meaning suffers when the quoted phrase is considered apart from the circumstances. He desired battle because the moment was ripe. If there was a difference between Saxe's outlook and Napoleon's, with results that can be seen in history, there was not the complete contrast which Foch implies. Like

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most of his fellow-students, Foch had swung, in reaction from an extreme which Saxe had never reached, to an extreme which Napoleon had never contemplated.

Foch's view of the cause of indecisiveness in eighteenth-century warfare was corrected by a successor at the Ecole de Guerre, Colin, who had studied war more widely and Napoleon more deeply. He caustically remarked that limited results and slow methods were not peculiar to this century; that they could be discovered even in the wars waged by the armed peoples of Greece and Republican Rome. He argued that indecisiveness in war was due to the resistance of material factors rather than to irresolute intentions. "There was a simple way of avoiding such mistakes, and that was to go and spend a few hours among the public archives, or even to read a few pages of the political correspondence of Richelieu or of Frederick, when the sentiments that animated the rulers of those days would have been apparent, as well as the motives that inspired the conduct of their generals. And it would also have been seen that governments, far from inculcating generals with dilatoriness, were perpetually reproaching them for it." If dilatoriness was prevalent, it was largely the product of material hindrances, or at least of the habit formed in wrestling with them. What were the material causes of indecisiveness? First, that the development of fortification had outpaced that of weapons, giving to the defensive in the eighteenth century a preponderance such as was restored to it in the twentieth by the machine-gun. Second, armies were not yet organised in permanently self-organised fractions—divisions—but usually moved and fought as a single "piece," a condition which limited their scope of movement and power of distracting the opponent. A third, if perhaps lesser handicap, was due to ethical progress. For an increased humanity in the conduct of war increased the dependence of armies upon magazines and dépôts for their supplies. This tended to cramp movement and encourage siege operations. In contrast, the chaotic supply system and the undisciplined nature of the French Revolutionary armies was to compel a reversion to the old practice of living on the country. And, owing to the new organisation of the army in permanent divisions, this practice

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detracted less from the army's effectiveness than in old days. By moving apart from each other the divisions could feed themselves more easily, and while feeding themselves could be fulfilling their part in the general plan. Napoleon perceived and turned to profit this dual condition. His army formed a wide-stretching net that was only drawn tight round the object of his cast. At the outset of his first campaign of 1796, his sixty thousand men were stretched over seventy-five miles. In his next campaign he distributed an army of forty-five thousand men over a front of a hundred miles. When he became Emperor—and his divisions, corps—he assembled the Grand Army on still wider frontages. Yet in the eyes of many superficial students of war Napoleon is the exponent of extreme and unvarying concentration.

The consequences of this delusion have been seen in modern war. It is true that increased numbers made it difficult to leave wider intervals between the army corps or armies—and so cramped Napoleonic manœuvres—but even where an interval was possible, commanders have avoided leaving it. Instead, they have closed in to close it, fearful of the risks they might run if they did not march shoulder to shoulder—but reckless of the opportunities thus lost for menacing and out-flanking their opponents. Yet the risks to their own security had grown less as the range of weapons and the means of communication had developed.

It is to the credit of Colin that he disinterred the facts of history, and avoided the glib assumption that the difference between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century warfare was a difference of spirit.

But in some of his deductions from the facts Colin shared the common pitfall. He believed that "progress in firearms invariably favours the offensive." Foch similarly declared that "any improvement in firearms is ultimately bound to add strength to the offensive, to a cleverly conducted attack. History shows it, reason explains it."

Colin's argument for his belief was, however, the better reasoned. Its basis was that improved weapons give the widely distributed parts of an army greater resisting power, and so

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allow more time and resources to be available for the decisive manœuvre. This is true so far as there is space and aptitude for such wide distribution, although even then it only holds true so long as weapon values in attack and defence are comparable. It breaks down if a superior weight of fire in the attack does not suffice to overcome the weapons of the defences.

Foch, on the other hand, justified his contention not by logic but by arithmetic.

“Nothing is easier than to give a mathematical demonstration of that truth :

Suppose you launch 2 battalions against	..	1
You then launch 2,000 men against	1,000
With a rifle fire of 1 shot to a minute, 1,000 de-		
fenders will fire	1,000 bullets
With the same rifle, 2,000 assailants will fire	..	2,000 „

Balance in favour of the attack .. 1,000

With a rifle firing 10 shots a minute, 1,000 de-		
fenders will fire within 1 minute	10,000
With the same rifle, 2,000 assailants will fire	..	20,000

Balance 10,000

As you see, the material superiority of fire quickly increases in favour of the attack as a result of improved firearms.”

This mathematical but astonishingly unpractical calculation leaves out of account the question of fire effect; the facility of fire while lying down that was given by the modern rifle; the defender's ability to fire from behind cover and with more careful aim; the larger target which the attacker offers. If some of these advantages of the rifle in defence were reduced by the development of artillery, this in turn was more than offset by the advent of the machine-gun. In the light of 1914-18 Foch's mathematics appear at fault.

Yet this brief calculation satisfied him that he could discount “the omnipotence falsely ascribed to material power.” With

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it he dismissed the influence of armament and passed on to the moral factors. Yet, paradoxically, to these he ascribed an essentially physical foundation: "No victory without fighting." It is the more curious that he should have disregarded economic pressure because he followed this declaration with the inconsistent argument that war between modern nations was essentially economic in origin: "War is now becoming the means they use to enrich themselves." In proof, he pointed to the economic benefits which Germany had gained from the war of 1870, and claimed the Chino-Japanese, Spanish-American, and South African wars as further proofs of his thesis. "Who was responsible for the Boer War? Certainly not the Queen of England, but the merchants of the City."

"War, to-day, is a commercial enterprise undertaken by the whole nation. It concerns the individual more directly than did war in the past, and therefore appeals much more to individual passions." Seemingly it was this idea—the passion shown by the grasping peasant, rather than the calculation made by the merchant—that inspired Foch's conception of the nature of future war. The successful merchant knows when to cut his loss; he will not ruin himself to beat a competitor. In 1914-18 the warring nations assuredly did not show this commercial acumen. In so far, they justified Foch's conception. But the heads of commerce and industry were not blinded by passion, and patriotism had no relation to the profit that some drew. With the masses, passion was but a fitful and partial flame from a deeper emotional disturbance. This mood cooled gradually to a grey acquiescence. The national leaders declared that the struggle must be pursued to decisive victory, although they began to see that it could not repay the cost. But they had lost the pre-Clausewitzian habit of settlement by negotiation, of making the best of a bad bargain. This reflection suggests that the nations were enslaved by a military doctrine—the doctrine of a fight to a finish—from which, once committed to war, they were helpless to shake free.

But Foch saw no inconsistency in ascribing to modern nations, in wars of economic cause, the emotions of the French Revolution. And, owing to "the similarity," he deduced that

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"it is to the theory of *decision by arms* that war is now wholly returning; one can now apply no other." "*No strategy can henceforth prevail over that which aims at ensuring tactical results, victory by fighting.* A strategy paving the way to tactical decisions alone: this is the end we come to. . . ." Foch's verdict was reinforced by a long quotation from Clausewitz which, as one of many, confirms the impression that Foch's theory of war was but the reflection of Clausewitz, save for certain contradictions original to himself. But, because Foch's mind was simpler and his study narrower, he concentrated on the more concrete points of Clausewitz—and pressed them to an extreme. Instead of seeing tactics as a tool of strategy, he made strategy merely the servant of tactics.

"As, then, strategy does not exist by itself . . . as tactical results are everything, let us see out of what those results are made." Again quoting Clausewitz, and carrying his doctrine to a theoretical extreme, Foch declared "the necessity of organising a shock both supreme and final." "It is characterised by three things—preparation, mass, impulsion." "Preparation in modern war is more necessary and must be pushed further than in the past. . . . One thing alone is of import: the point of preparation reached at the actual outbreak of war. . . . Thus the nature of Napoleonic preparation has been, so to speak, reinforced; it has been reinforced to such a degree that the results of the first operations have been both hastened and made crushing and final."

Foch's conception shows the influence of a particular case, that of 1870. The trend of his thought helps us to realise why the value of reserves, not to mention economic and sea power, was so underrated by the French leaders before 1914.

"Let us now turn to tactical action. In what does it consist? There is but one means of treating with the adversary, namely to beat him, and therefore to overthrow him. Hence the idea of a shock composed of two terms: *mass* and *impulsion*." "May we not stand and await that shock? Certainly not. If we did not seek it, it might well either not occur at all, or occur under bad conditions and we might then fail to destroy the forces of the adversary, which is in war the only means of reaching

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our end." Thus we see Foch, denying all virtue to the defensive, pave the way for the extreme theory of the offensive, the offensive under all circumstances.

He begins his third chapter with the statement: "As we have previously seen, modern war knows but one argument: the tactical fact, battle." But, having simplified the practice of war to the theoretical ideal of an immediate and final battle, Foch becomes practical in his detailed treatment of this theory. Indeed, his discussion of it is almost exclusively logistical, dwelling upon the factors of time, space and movement, with comparatively slight reference to the psychological side.

In order to make the shock possible, the "mobile and unknown enemy must first be *discovered*, then *reconnoitred*, and then *fixed*, or pinned, so that the play of our forces may strike him." For these purposes, as well as to safeguard one's own concentration while hindering the enemy's, a series of detachments must be provided. Foch recognises that this initial *dispersion* is in apparent contradiction of his emphasis on *concentration*. But he finds in the "principle of economy of forces" a way of reconciliation. This "economy" was used not in the sense of sparing, of "economising," but in the sense of economic management. Instead of a fixed distribution of the army according to preconceived rôles, all parts should be interchangeable and utilised to the full measure of their capacity.

"The principle of economy of forces is the art of pouring out *all* one's resources at a given moment on one spot; of making use there of *all* troops, and, to make such a thing possible, of making those troops permanently communicate with each other, instead of dividing them and attaching to each fraction some fixed and invariable function; its second part, a result having been attained, is the art of again so disposing the troops as to converge upon, and act against, a new single object. Again: the economy of forces is the art of making the weight of *all* one's forces *successively* bear on the resistance which one may meet, and therefore of organising those forces by means of a *system*."

It would perhaps have been more exact, and shorter, to say that an army should always be so distributed that its parts can

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come to each other's aid and combine to produce the maximum *possible* concentration of force at one place, while the minimum force *necessary* is engaged elsewhere in the task of ensuring the security and success of the concentration.

To concentrate *all* is an unrealisable ideal. Moreover, in practice the "minimum necessary" may actually form a far larger proportion of the total than the "maximum possible." It would even be true to say that the larger the force that is effectively used for distraction of the enemy, the greater is the chance of the concentration succeeding in its aim. For, otherwise, it may strike an object too solid to be shattered. Superior weight at the intended decisive point does not suffice unless that point cannot be reinforced in time by the opponent. It rarely suffices unless that point is not merely weaker numerically but has been weakened morally. Napoleon suffered some of his worst checks because he neglected this guarantee. And the need for *distraction* has grown with the delaying power of weapons. Foch did not emphasise, nor, it would seem, adequately realise, this qualifying condition to the principle of economy of forces.

He traced the principle to Carnot's instructions to the generals of the Revolution. "He sought to remedy the *scattering and crumbling* which were ruining France's considerable forces (fourteen armies in 1794) by means of convergence of effort and singleness of goal. . . . For the block of the ancient armies, which could no longer reappear, as it was utterly incapable of manœuvring on the new scale, he tried to substitute concordance and synchrony in many efforts starting from various points." The tribute to Carnot is well earned, but Foch reveals the limitations of his historical knowledge when he adds: "At Wattignies, Carnot being present, *the idea of an attack by superior forces on a point of the line first made its appearance.*" The idea, as a definite conception, can certainly be traced back to Leuctra in 371 B.C. But even if Foch was ignorant of classical warfare, it is curious that he should have been so obsessed with the French Revolution as to overlook Frederick the Great's oblique order. A different method of production did not make it a different idea.

In showing how the main blow should be delivered, Foch

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quoted Napoleon's words at Leoben: "I see only one thing, the *masses* ; I try to destroy them, feeling sure that the *accessories* will fall of themselves." This quotation, a favourite one with all the disciples of Clausewitz, has a brevity that is dangerously misleading. The words were spoken by Napoleon to the enemy generals with whom he was negotiating an armistice. They were uttered at the end of a campaign in which he had first concentrated on and defeated the Austrians' weaker partner; then had enticed successive parts of the Austrian Army to his chosen battleground; and, in each successive phase, had concentrated against a fraction of each part. Napoleon's ultimate aim may have been to "destroy the masses"; his method had been to destroy them piecemeal. He only told his opponents the obvious conclusion, not how he had beaten them.

The success of his concentration was dependent on his opponents' dispersion, and his own dispersion was the necessary prelude to theirs. Foch did not dwell on this aspect. His emphasis is placed on the direct means of protecting one's own concentration: "In order to dispose of the adversary's masses, we have to ensure the working of our own." "From that condition . . . will arise all those subordinate parts assigned to detachments (advanced guards, flank guards, rear guards) to which we apply the general name of advanced guards." "They must remain closely connected with the main body, in the movement of which they participate, from which they draw their life, for the benefit of which alone they do their work; that connection must be close enough to allow the body always to concentrate its whole weight as well as all disengaged forces in the direction where the adversary has been perceived or seized; a final result which can only be attained . . . by means of a systematic organisation involving: *eyes* turned towards such directions as are of interest to the issue; *arms* extended in such directions as menace peril; freedom of movement for the main body to strike finally in the direction *selected* for the result."

Here we see Foch's adoption of Bonnal's theory that the secret of Napoleon's method and his success lay in the use of a strategic advanced guard—as tentacles to feel for and seize hold of the opponent. Foch gave a more elastic sense to the

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idea which tended to become geometrical. He also recognised the value and necessity of defence on the part of the tentacles. "Their resisting power in presence of superior enemy forces will result either from (1) a *defensive action* utilising a strong position and holding back an enemy unable to overcome it; or (2) a *retreating manœuvre* the duration of which (being itself dependent on available time and space) will allow the main body to act in accord with the plan conceived."

Foch illustrated his idea of the principle of economy of force by an analytical narrative of Bonaparte's first campaign of 1796. With a wealth of carefully chosen detail to paint the picture, he showed Bonaparte on the Genoese Riviera, facing the Allied Austrian and Piedmontese Armies, which together had the numerical superiority. Whilst Carnot, obsessed by his new theory, urged that the French should march directly toward Milan and strike at the main enemy—the Austrians—Bonaparte preferred to march against the joint between the two armies and then, having pushed back the inner flank of the Austrians in confusion, to strike decisively at the isolated Piedmontese.

Foch admirably sketched the fulfilment of Bonaparte's plan. He showed how Bonaparte utilised his wide grouping to throw his weight in successive directions; how he first checked the Austrian threat against his extreme right near Genoa; then delivered a quick thrust against the Austrian centre, meantime seizing a point of approach to the joint; then striking at the joint, while simultaneously clearing the path for the outward wheel against the Piedmontese; finally, making this advance against the now exposed inner flank of the Piedmontese, who capitulated before the approaching menace to their capital, Turin.

There is an ironical flavour in the fact that Foch, who had just previously asserted that the only purpose of strategy was to pave the way for a tactical decision, should have chosen as his first example a campaign which was decided by strategy without a decisive battle—and decided through a menace to one of the "geographical objectives" which Foch derided. Napoleon confessed at St. Helena: "I have fought sixty battles and I have learned nothing I did not know at the beginning." Perhaps he

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had unlearned something. For at least it is true that his first campaign was decided by strategy so superior that there was no opportunity for battle. It was an example that fulfilled Marshal Saxe's ideal.

Seemingly, Foch's faith in the theory that he had imbibed from Clausewitz was so strong as to blind him to the very facts he utilised. For, instead of accepting the natural explanation for Bonaparte's plan, Foch laboriously argued that Carnot's principle of concentrating against the main army first did not apply here because the enemy armies "represented two distinct groups, each with divergent interests. . . ." "Both adversaries had, therefore, to be beaten separately, both questions had to be treated separately; the war could not be brought to an end by striking one of the enemy armies, even though it were the stronger of the two." Yet in 1914-18, when the enemy alliance offered a similar divergency, Foch forgot his own argument in urging that Germany must be beaten first.

It is the more curious that he should have invented such an excuse for Bonaparte's plan because he quotes Bonaparte's own words in explanation of his choice—"to attack the enemy in the best direction," and "to attack one isolated fragment of the opposing forces, the Piedmontese Army, once it was definitely deprived of any external help." "By entering Italy via Savona, Cadibona, Carcare, and Bormida, one might hope to separate the Sardinian from the Austrian Army, because from that direction one threatened Lombardy and Piedmont equally. The interest of the Piedmontese was to cover Turin, that of the Austrians to cover Milan."

This explanation also contradicts the superficial deduction drawn from Napoleon's remark: "I see only one thing." If he struck at only one point at a time, he saw two points—and made his enemy see them. Here he discloses an essential part of his method, that of taking a line which threatened alternative objectives, thus distracting his opponents' mind and forces. Seventy years later another military genius, Sherman, was to rediscover the method and to express its aim as that of "putting the enemy on the horns of a dilemma." For full effect this elastic direction must be carried to an elastic end. Although

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the commander may initially decide to seek one of his alternative objectives, if the enemy concentrates to cover this he will be wise to strike at the other, more exposed. A plan must have branches like a tree if it is to bear fruit. A plan with a simple aim is like a barren pole. Napoleon expressed his perception of this truth when he said to Gourgaud that "the great art" was "to change, during the action, the line of operations; it is an idea of mine, which is entirely new." The last claim, however, was unjust; it ignored Napoleon's debt to the teachings of Bourcet, who, fifty years earlier, had laid down that "every plan of campaign ought to have several branches and to have been so well thought out that one or other of the said branches cannot fail of success."

How strange that the military thinkers of the nineteenth century should have ignored the pattern of Napoleon's manœuvre when thus confirmed from his own mouth! Both their precepts and their practice show that they confused singleness of stroke with singleness of objective. Thereby their stroke lost the moral sharpness necessary to cleave the opponent's shield, while they, in consequence, too often blunted the moral edge of their own weapon.

This material and physical trend of thought is clearly seen in the conclusion of Foch's chapter on economy of forces. "In strategy as in tactics, a decision is constantly enforced by mechanics, by applying to part of the enemy forces a main body made as strong as possible. . . . To this end *forces* must be constantly arranged according to a system: (1) On the periphery, a number of advanced guards (i) attacking in order to reconnoitre, (ii) to fix the enemy to the benefit of (iii) the main body, (iv) or parrying an attack in order to cover the main body; (2) in the rear, the *main body* manœuvring in the direction of the objective aimed at. The main body and the advanced guards must be in constant communication with each other, so as to allow, at a given moment, the transference of the whole weight of the mass in the direction of the objective attacked."

What Foch termed "this new conception of military mechanics" is admirable—as the mechanical side of economy of

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force. But to mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy is even more essential, for it gives to the available forces a higher value. Yet Foch did not dwell on these moral agents. The rôles assigned to his "advanced guards" were essentially protective, designed to secure his main body against surprise by the enemy. Thus, to our surprise, we find that Foch reverted from a moral to a mechanical conception of war when he came down from abstractions to concrete problems.

Foch's study of the moral factors was one-sided. His concern with them was to guarantee the working of his own machine rather than to interfere with the enemy's. To this problem, this half of the problem, the rest of his book is devoted.

The fourth chapter is entitled "Intellectual Discipline"; taking the principle of "freedom of action" as a corollary to economy of force, he treated freedom of action as a function of obedience. As economy of force is the product of combination, so that combination depends on the intelligent subordination of each part to the interests of the whole. The Commander-in-Chief "alone writes music and leads the orchestra. The others only play their part in that orchestra." Here we see a metaphor that was a favourite with Foch in later years.

For harmonious combination there must be: "*A mental discipline*, as a first condition; showing and prescribing to all subordinates the result aimed at by the commander. *Intelligent and active discipline*, or rather *initiative*, a second condition, in order to maintain the right and power of acting in the desired direction." "Such a notion obviously involves an act of deliberate thought, of reflection; it excludes mental immobility, want of thought, intellectual silence—all of which are well enough for the rank and file who have but to perform (although it would certainly be better for them to understand what they have to perform), but which would never do for the subordinate commander: the latter must bring to fruition, with all the means at his disposal, the scheme of the higher command; therefore he must, above all, understand that thought, and afterwards make of his means *the use best suited to circumstances*—of which, however, he is the *only judge*." "To *passive obedience*, such

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as used to be in favour under absolute systems of the past, we oppose *active* obedience."

"To be disciplined does not mean that one does not commit any breach of discipline; . . . does not mean being silent, abstaining, or doing only what one thinks one may undertake *without risk*; it is not the art of *eluding responsibility*; it means *acting* in compliance with orders received, and therefore of finding *in one's own mind*, by effort and reflection, the possibility to carry out such orders. It also means finding *in one's own will* the energy to face the risks involved in execution."

This definition is apt in spirit. To illustrate it Foch used an example from 1870. He showed how on August 4th De Failly received an order to concentrate his army corps at Bitchie, where he would be able to support Marshal de MacMahon. By excessive fear for its own security, combined with ill-conceived measures, the corps suffered such delays that it arrived too late to take part in the battle and too exhausted to retrieve the issue. Ignorance on the part of the commanders had been the equivalent of indiscipline. Hence Foch devotes his next chapter to a practical study of how the problem of the march should have been treated and the security of the corps ensured. It is, above all, a lesson in the intelligent use of a flank guard, using natural positions to delay for the time necessary any enemy approach which might have interfered with the smooth progress of the main body to Bitche.

Then, as a positive example, Foch takes the case of General von Kettler's operations against Garibaldi's army in January, 1871. Kettler's brigade had been ordered by his superior, Manteuffel, to march on Dijon in order to forestall interference from the French forces there. He had four thousand men against over thirty thousand. He attacked in turn a series of points which were suited to his slender means of attack, which could then be economically held, and which would provide a secure pivot for a fresh manoeuvre. By his calculated audacity he deceived Garibaldi as to his strength and immobilised Garibaldi's forces while Manteuffel was defeating Bourbaki. That Kettler paid heavily for this achievement did not matter, for the repulse of his detachment counted for nothing beside

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the success of the army to which it belonged. This was an example after Foch's heart, and he describes it with an enthusiasm that is untinged by any national prejudice.

This concrete illustration of "intellectual discipline" paves the way to a general discussion of the meaning of *sûreté*. The word "security" is normally used in translation to express the idea; but no single English word is adequate. For *sûreté* has the sense of sureness as well as of assurance of safety; it implies that the commander acts with secure knowledge as well as with physical protection. This fuller sense must be understood when, in what follows, the term "security" is used to denote Foch's *sûreté*.

Foch defines the condition as embracing:

"(1) *Material security*, which makes it possible to avoid enemy blows when one does not desire to strike back or cannot do so; this is the means of *feeling secure* in the midst of danger, of halting and marching under shelter.

"(2) *Tactical security*, which makes it possible to continue carrying out a programme, an order received, in spite of chance unfavourable circumstances produced by war, in spite of the unknown, of measures taken by the enemy of his own free will; also to act *securely and with certainty, whatever the enemy may do*, by safeguarding *one's own freedom of action*.

"Material surprise means losing material security; we have, in the case of such surprise, the enemy freely firing into our billets, our bivouacs, or our marching columns. Tactical surprise means endangering tactical security, losing freedom of action."

Foch then points out that the advanced guard, using the term in its comprehensive sense, is the organ which guarantees tactical security by its action, while its own protective dispositions—its use of advanced detachments or outposts, reinforced if necessary—provide material security both to itself and the main body. That security "is based on two elements, two mathematical quantities: *time* and *space*; it also contains a third element: the *resisting power* of the troops." Foch adds that "so far as *space* is concerned, the following principle is both absolute and elementary: a force must always be master of the ground surround-

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ing it up to the extreme range of its weapons, if it wishes to avoid being outflanked, enveloped, encircled, exposed to the havoc wrought by modern weapons, destroyed before being able to fight. That space which ought to be protected from the blows and observation of the enemy is what we call the *zone of manœuvre*."

But the advanced guard is also a means of paving the way for the battle. For this it must:

"(1) Supply information as to what point or points ought to be struck.

"(2) Guarantee the possibility of bringing and deploying the main body face to face with the selected objectives.

"(3) Cover the main body during all preparatory operations."
"The *unknown* is the ruling condition of war . . . how can we master that unavoidable unknown, how shall we manage to see through the thick fog which always shrouds the situations and actions of the enemy? By utilising the advanced guard."

Foch illustrates his meaning with one of his most apt metaphors. "When one moves at night, without light, in one's own house, what does one do? Does one not (though it is a ground one knows well) extend one's arm in front of one so as to avoid knocking one's head against the wall? The extended arm is nothing but an advanced guard."

"The arm keeps its suppleness while it advances and only stiffens more or less when it meets an obstacle, in order to perform its duty without risk, to open a door, etc.; in the same way, the advanced guard can advance and go into action without risk, provided it uses suppleness and strength, manœuvring power, resisting power."

Foch points out that conditions have changed with the increasing range of weapons. In Napoleon's time the unknown disappeared when one arrived on the battlefield, and could see the enemy forces. Long-range weapons brought greater dispersion and distances. The advent of smokeless powder made it difficult even to gauge where the enemy units were posted. Hence the advanced guard must break through the enemy's covering troops in order to reconnoitre his main body. As one's own main body will be strung out on the road behind, the ad-

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vanced guard must also be able to cover it while it is assembling and preparing its attack. During this interval the advanced guard must be capable not only of resisting but of gaining vantage-points which will facilitate the impending attack. Foch illustrates each point with historical examples.

But the advanced guard must also pin down the enemy. "You cannot strike with your fist an enemy who is running away in order to evade the blow. You must first seize him by the collar to compel him to receive the blow. The hand on the collar is the action of the advanced guard."

It is significant that Foch conceives the enemy either as trying to evade the blow or as striking a blow at him. It is thus, perhaps, that he does not consider the action appropriate when the enemy is waiting, solidly and ready, to resist his blow. Again, while he lays great stress on the "retreating manœuvre," or strategic retreat, as a means to be used by advanced forces in warding off the enemy's interference, he does not suggest its possibilities as a means of preparing one's own blow—i.e. luring the enemy from his own ground into an advantageous situation for a counter-stroke. Yet this had been one of the favourite manœuvres of the great commanders before Napoleon, and the occasional manœuvre that had repaid Napoleon himself most richly.

Foch does, however, emphasise two additional points of value. First, that the advanced guard should be composed of all arms, not of cavalry alone, which do not possess adequate penetrative or resisting power, and so cannot adequately fulfil the triple function of searching, covering, and pinning. Second, that the need for an advanced guard does not end when the main body has deployed; it should remain in being and active so as to prevent the opponent regaining his freedom of action while the attack is developing.

Foch now proceeds to amplify his theory of advanced guard action by an analysis of the Battle of Nachod in 1866, which occupies seventy pages, a fifth of the whole book. It is a study of the advanced guard to the Prussian V Corps under Steinmetz. Thus it is essentially a study of tactical security, within the narrow limits of a single corps' front and march-route. And

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because of this large-scale survey of a small incident, this "minute study," the deductions had inevitably a relatively uncertain factual basis. Nevertheless, the chapter forms a suggestive and able treatise on the mechanics of action, and, to a less degree, on the psychology of command.

It is too full for an adequate summary, but some of the comments are sidelights on Foch's thought: "The Austrians were to have the luck at the beginning. . . . There are other things in war than principles; there are time, places, distances, ground, chance which cannot be mastered. The Austrians ended all the same in being beaten. You cannot violate principles with impunity; fortune tires out, mind soon vindicates its right over matter and chance."

"To command, in the sense implied by the extension of modern battle, can only consist, for the commander-in-chief, in determining clearly the result to be aimed at, the general function ascribed to each subordinate unit in the operations undertaken by the whole of the forces; at the same time such a determination must leave the subordinate chief entirely free to choose the means which have to be used. . . ."

Particularly illuminating are Foch's comments on the minor tactics of the attack, or at least its tactical mechanism. In his valuation of fire he was certainly more of a realist than many of his contemporaries and disciples.

He criticised the Austrians because they "thought they would secure speed by cohesion; they only secured rigidity; the latter prevented them utilising the broken ground. . . . Moreover, this arrangement of theirs entirely overlooked *action by fire*."

"Fire has, indeed, become an unavoidable phase of that action through force called *attack*. You can no longer assault an untouched adversary as one so often did in the old days, by merely appealing to energy." Had Foch an uneasy intuition of the 1914 doctrine and its consequences? "The stronger moral qualities in troops melt away under the efforts of modern arms if the enemy is permitted to let loose his whole power."

He was sufficiently conservative to hold that "attack with the bayonet . . . always reappears as a supreme and necessary argument in order to complete the enemy's demoralisation by

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threatening to board him as if he were a ship, also in order to create fear." But he declared that "it nevertheless remains undeniable that superiority of fire is an advantage one ought to secure; first, in order to reduce him, to make it easier to assault him; and secondly, in order to reach the moral level which is required for an assault."

Foch accepted the German theory of dividing the attack into three stages: the first, an advance to a fire-position within six to eight hundred yards of the enemy; the second, a fire-action to gain superiority; third, an advance to the assault. With notable common sense he argued that in the first place the use of "ground, and such sheltered approaches as the ground may contain" provided "the only really efficient means of advancing in spite of the enemy's fire, for then the enemy ceases to see." The infantry should move in "small, scattered units." Rigid formations and formalism should be eschewed, and they should "slip on" along covered approaches and from cover to cover.

He emphasised, too, the essential importance of "training camps, which alone make it possible to study *the conduct of troops in action (fire in war) and to give the rank and file a thorough and practical fire-training.*" He foresaw the "successive" form of the infantry attack in modern warfare against a resistance distributed in depth, and to some degree the type of local manœuvre that culminated in the infiltration method of 1918. "It is into such a series of successive actions that combat transforms itself as a consequence of modern armament; the attacking force tries to advance to the right when it can no longer advance straight ahead; it tries to manœuvre by a wing when the other wing is held up. . . ."

These views entitle him to be numbered among the progressive school of tactical thought. He was, again, more practical than the doctrine of 1914 when he said: "We must also apply all the guns available. We shall ask the artillery to prepare the attack"—not merely to support it.

But he conformed to the rather academic belief that "superiority in numbers," in the fire-action on the eight hundred yard distant position "should guarantee superior efficiency," and that it would usually suffice to beat down the enemy's fire. The

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fallacy of such arithmetical calculations and overestimate of the effect of fire on men behind cover was revealed in 1914, as it had already been in 1904. It is also significant of an outlook that in appraising the causes of Prussian success against the Austrians he made no direct reference to the breech-loading rifle of the former. He merely mentioned among these Causes "of course, the superiority of armament" and immediately added, "but even more . . . a strict discipline, in close formation . . . which had made it possible . . . to direct the fire effectively."

His study of Nachod concluded, Foch devotes two chapters to "Strategical Surprise" and "Strategical Security" respectively. But the reader suffers a surprise on finding that the former chapter deals only with the means of preventing surprise. It shows how, on August 15th, 1870, Moltke imperilled his Second Army by jumping to the conclusion that the French were completely beaten and telling the armies: "It is likely that they are by now in full retreat on Verdun." Prince Frederick Charles, commanding the Second Army, promptly interpreted the likelihood as a certainty, and, given a free hand, hurried towards the Meuse with the idea of catching the beaten foe. But the French were still near Metz and had not been truly beaten. In consequence, Frederick Charles blundered into them with only part of his army and, isolated from the other armies, was lucky to escape being beaten. Foch rubbed in the lesson of *sûreté*, while showing that the subordinates on the spot were alive to the danger. "People in high quarters believed they could do without security; the performers in the front rank reinstate security. They do not advance blindfold in the midst of danger. It was merely human; such a game would have proved too risky for them."

It is, as Foch says, "a highly practical lesson." But it reads a little ironically in the light of October, 1914.

The chapter entitled "Strategical Security" differs only from the other in giving positive examples. It takes first the advance of Eugène's army in the campaign of 1809, and quotes Napoleon's instructions to Eugène to use a strong advanced guard in feeling his way, instead of acting on supposition. Next, Foch

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utilises the comments of Clausewitz on 1815 to show how the Prussians had time to concentrate at Ligny because Ziethen's corps, as advanced guard, served to absorb and delay the shock. It acted, in fact, as a pneumatic buffer. But its loss and risk would have been less if it had originally been further in advance of the other corps, for in the buffer rôle a slow retreat is more advisable than a fighting stand, but needs sufficient room. Foch remarks that the time resistance may safely last "has obviously increased with modern arms." This was a true forecast, and it is rather curious that he did not perceive the underlying contradiction to his earlier deduction that the improvement in firearms favoured the offensive.

The book passes, or passes more completely, to the subject of battle in its concluding chapters. If the book had been called, not *The Principles of War*, but *Some Principles of Tactics*, it would have been more true to its nature and a truer expression of its limitations. In "The Battle: Decisive Attack," Foch opens in his resonant platform manner with the reiterated declaration: "In order to reach its *end* . . . modern war uses but one *means*: the destruction of the organised forces of the enemy." "Let us come today to battle, which is the only *argument* in war, therefore the only end that must be given to strategical operations. . . ." We seem to hear the Muse of History laughing quietly in the wings.

"Defensive battle never brings about the destruction of enemy forces; it never allows one to conquer the ground held by the enemy (which after all is the only external sign of victory), therefore, it is unable to create victory." Much truth as these arguments hold, we do not recall that Foch disclaimed victory after the defensive Battle of Ypres, 1914. "Hence the conclusion that the *offensive* form alone, be it resorted to at once or only after the *defensive*, can lead to results, and must therefore *always* be adopted. . . . Any defensive battle must, then, end in an offensive action, in a riposte, in a successful counter-offensive, otherwise there is no assault." This qualifying admission that the defensive-offensive has its place encourages the reader's expectation that it will be adequately discussed, perhaps illustrated by a study of Austerlitz. But this passing reference

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proves to be the last, as it was the first, recognition in the book of such a form of action.

Then, turning to the factors which determine the issue of battle, Foch quoted Napoleon's saying: "Two Mamelukes could hold their own against three Frenchmen; but a hundred Frenchmen did not fear a hundred Mamelukes; three hundred would beat an equal number; and a thousand would beat one thousand five hundred—so great was the influence of *tactics, order, and manœuvres*." These are the factors that bring victory. Foch further claims: "We, the French, possess a fighter, a soldier, undeniably superior to the one beyond the Vosges in his racial qualities, activity, intelligence, spirit, power of exaltation, devotion, patriotism. . . . If we are beaten it will be due to the weakness of our tactics." The sweeping claim is more creditable to the fervent patriot than to the scientific soldier. And in suggesting that faulty tactics might prove the cause of defeat, Foch unaccountably overlooked strategy. In failure here was to lie the initial cause of defeat in August, 1914.

Foch then enquires how a superior tactical combination gains its end. Is it by inflicting a "high total of losses," bringing to bear better weapons or more weapons? To such ideas Foch replies with a quotation from General Cardot: "One hundred thousand men suffer ten thousand casualties and confess themselves beaten: they retreat before the victors who have lost as many men, if not more. Moreover, neither the one side nor the other knows, when retiring, either what numbers they have lost themselves or what the casualties have been on the opposite side. Ninety thousand vanquished men retire before ninety thousand victors merely because they have had enough of it, . . . because they are *demoralised*, because their *moral* resistance is exhausted." Foch reinforces this with the quotation from Joseph de Maistre: "A battle lost is a battle one thinks one has lost; for a battle cannot be lost physically."

Foch himself extends the aphorism by saying: "A battle won is a battle in which one will not confess oneself beaten." "To organise battle consists in enhancing our own spirit to the highest degree in order to break that of the enemy. The will to conquer: such is victory's primary condition."

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It is significant that Foch, after exalting the active form of war, should now lay greater stress on the passive aspect of the moral struggle—the strengthening of one's own spirit. It is true that he comes later to the active aspect, that of upsetting the enemy's moral balance, but we feel less inspiration, less depth, in his discussion of it. Was this tendency the product of 1870?

The will to conquer "amounts to a supreme resolve which the commander must, if need be, impart to the soldier's soul." "To think, to will, to possess intelligence and energy, will not suffice for him; he must possess also the 'imperative fluid' (De Brack), the gift of communicating his own supreme energy to the masses of men who are, so to speak, his weapon; for an army is to a chief what a sword is to a soldier. It is only worth anything in so far as it receives from him a certain impulse. . . ." "Great results in war are due to the commander. History is therefore right in making generals responsible for victories, in which case they are glorified; and for defeats, in which case they are disgraced." One wonders whether this reflection came back to Foch's mind at the end of 1916, and helped him to endure his own penalty with equanimity. "Is it not, again, this influence of the commander, the very enthusiasm derived from him, which alone can explain the unconscious movements of human masses at those solemn moments when, without knowing why it is doing so, an army on the battlefield feels it is being carried forward as if it were gliding down a slope?"

Foch reinforces his own words with "masses" of quotations, but he imparts "an imperative fluid" of his own. And later years were to show that he possessed the gift of communicating it, at least to those men with whom he came in contact. How far it spread outward and downward is a question—examined in the chapters on his war career. But we leave Foch's discussion of leadership with the feeling that here is neither theory nor pedantry, and with a sense of having been in direct contact with the spirit of the author—a spirit that has both transcended and broken free from the academic sphere.

In the next section Foch examines the problem of breaking the enemy's spirit. The section seems disproportionately brief.

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But it opens promisingly with a quotation from Xenophon, first of the great writers on war and the acknowledged guide of the Great Captains: "Whatever a thing may be, be it pleasant or variable, the less it has been foreseen, the more it pleases or frightens. This is seen nowhere better than in war, where surprise strikes with terror even those who are much the stronger party." And Foch himself adds: "The means of breaking the enemy's spirit, of proving to him that his cause is lost, is, then, surprise in the widest sense of that word." "Here we have a novel instrument, and one capable of destructive power beyond all knowledge."

But in Foch's sense that "widest sense" is quickly narrowed down to that "of striking *one supreme stroke on one point*." Under his treatment surprise becomes hardly more than the prolongation—to a fine point—of his mechanistic theory. "A destructive force must be made to appear which should be known, or seen, to the enemy to be superior to his own; to this end, forces . . . must be concentrated on a point where the enemy is not able to *parry* instantly—that is, to answer by deploying an equal number of forces at the same time." "To surprise, thus amounts to crushing an opponent from a *short distance by numbers in a limit of time*."

The variety of surprise produced by the Great Captains, and its compound means, are briefly dismissed with the comment: "Setting an ambush, attacking in reverse, are possible in a small war, but impracticable in a great one." Can we be surprised, in view of such scant examination, that among the commanders of 1914 there was so little research for surprise? Can we wonder that the rediscovery of surprise, in its artistic range, was delayed until the last year of the war in France?

It is true that the scale of the forces tended to restrict the effect of surprise, and brought new difficulties into its execution. Obviously, an ambush—in the literal sense—could no longer be framed, save as a local incident. But there was still opportunity for subtle adaptation of the ambush idea—as was to be shown near Reims on July 15th, 1918. Even the First Battle of the Marne, if an intentional illustration, pointed the way to renewed possibilities. It is also true that the advent of aircraft tore aside

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the veil which formerly had hidden strategic manœuvres. But, in compensation for loss of concealment, it opened fresh opportunities for deception, and was an incentive to more subtle ingenuity—which might replace the veil with a false nose.

The criticism of Foch's teaching on surprise is not that it was a wrong diagnosis of the moral condition, but that it was too narrow and its treatment too shallow to make a due impression, to counteract the military predisposition towards physical action. Up to a point the diagnosis was discerning. An "army is a living and organised being. Now an organism is a set of organs, the health and good condition of all in which are necessary to the individual life. A loss in them—be it but the loss of one of them—brings about death. To beat an adversary, it is not necessary 'to sever his arms, his legs and his head, pierce his chest and burst open his belly all at once' (General Cardot). One sword thrust to the heart, or one stunning blow on the head, ensures the result. It is enough to overthrow the wing of an army, its centre—any important part of the whole—to ensure the result."

Here Foch carries simplification too far. The thrust to the heart or the blow on the head will certainly be decisive. But these organs will naturally be well guarded, the most guarded. It will only be possible to strike them by means of some terrific deception, or, more likely, after the paralysis of lesser organs has weakened the opponent's power to guard his major organs. And it is in this initial weakening, this crippling of functional activity, that real surprise has scope and is necessary.

Foch makes another good deduction from the fact that discipline is the condition on which "hierarchic organisation," and the transmission and execution of orders, depend. "Therefore, to break the chain is to put a stop at once to the functioning of all ranks, to transform tactical units into mere masses of men. . . . In order to break it, all you need do is to spread moral or physical disorder; to overthrow the organisation at *one point* of the system."

The first sentence is accurate, but the second too extreme. The effect of a break at one point is counteracted by the increase in the size of forces, and by the fact of their being composed of

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self-contained bodies. Multiplication of forces tends to localisation of physical effects. Hence it becomes more effective to play on the mind of the enemy commander than on the bodies of a section of his men. His mind is more accessible to the general influence of a local effect. It is strange that Foch, who had exalted the importance of the commander when discussing his own army, should have under-emphasised it when dealing with the enemy's.

Still less happy is the example he selects to illustrate his idea of surprise—the advancement of Macdonald's massive column at Wagram. Foch recognises its defects, even its absurdity, but claims that it produced a triumphant unexpectedness through its very crudity and violence. And he acclaims it as "a purely moral action, which alone brought about decision and a *complete decision*." But in fact the moral impression was chiefly on the French. Whereas the whole Austrian Army retired unbeaten and ready to renew the battle next day, we know that out of the thirty thousand men in that massed column, some twenty-four thousand shirked the suicidal sacrifice, while the sight of the three thousand who fell in its lumbering wake so shook the Grand Army that, a few hours later, it suffered the worst panic in its record and was too shaken to follow up its superficial advantage. The fruits of the battle were reaped not in pursuit but in diplomatic negotiation, where artifice retrieved what lack of artifice had seriously imperilled on the field of battle.

Only a narrow view would suggest that Wagram was a profitable victory; time, indeed, was to show that the "conquering of the ground held by the enemy" at Wagram was a dangerous illusion. And even that conquering is truly to be traced to the tremendous concentration of guns which blasted the hole rather than to the mere handful of men who staggered through it. If such a form of physical action to produce a moral effect was an absurdity in 1809, how much more so a century later, in the era of machine-guns! No allowance for improved formation of the mass can make a parallel practicable, or bridge the chasm between the two eras. The one real significance of the example is that a teacher of twentieth-century warfare should have used it as an illustration of moral action—thereby revealing

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the essentially mechanistic basis of the pre-1914 art of war.

This is still more clearly seen when Foch passes on to discuss the "battle of manœuvre" and to extol its merits in contrast to "the parallel battle." Of the second he says: "Such a battle consists in putting up with a constant, a successive wear and tear, until the result ensues from one or more successful actions of particular combatants—subordinate commanders or units. Such actions all remain second-rate, because their decision never involves more than a portion of the troops engaged." In face of such a verdict, how was it that the commanders of 1914–17, Foch among them, adopted such a partial method and expected success from it?

Rejecting it in his theory, Foch declared: "Mechanics as well as psychology leads us to the 'battle of manœuvre.' The means provided by the first consist in *applying superior forces on one point*; the means provided by the second consist in *producing a peril, an attack that cannot be parried*. . . . In the battle of manœuvre . . . the reserve is a *club* . . . hurled as one block, in the course of an action exceeding in violence and energy all the combats of the battle. . . ."

But this conception was built on a fallacy, and was undermined by the improvement of weapons which Foch too lightly passed over. The theory of the Greek phalanx, with its reliance on mass, is nullified by the modern machine-gun. The more ranks, the more swaths of dead—that is all. It is no use to concentrate a reserve five or ten lines deep at a point held by only one line of opponents, if your first line cannot break through that one line. In the face of this hard reality, the mechanistic theory of surprise broke down in the World War. The problem of surprise was found to be in the first place psychological, and only second, mechanical. To break one line one had to revive, if also to adapt, the old tricks of surprise practised throughout the ages in the despised "small war." Mechanics was then called into play to expand the opening and prevent its repair—in solving the problem of maintaining speed and continuity of advance.

Foch summed up his views in a chapter entitled "Modern Battle." In it he emphasised that "the part played by *prepara-*

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tion is becoming greater in every way: Inform better; Resist longer, and Fix more efficiently." The process would take the form of seizing the "important points of the ground"—a process that is not easy to reconcile with his running criticism of those who base their tactics on "geographical points." Foch, indeed, did not perceive the logical implication of his theory; it was left to the Germans to produce, in the infiltration method, tactics which truly disregarded—and annulled—the traditional value attached to such points.

Foch showed more prevision in discussing the action of artillery. He argued that artillery had the power "to grip hold of the enemy"; that its power must be developed early and to the full, keeping no guns in reserve; that it must "prepare the attack"; that it should be capable of concentrating its fire without the batteries being necessarily concentrated in space, "the artillery of the army corps working in a common direction (which does not mean in a single place)." Thus he foreshadowed the idea of manœuvre of fire.

But, like many artillerymen, he overestimated the effect of artillery fire in paralysing the resistance of well-posted infantry. He was confident that "superior fire" would silence the enemy's fire. And to this delusion we may perhaps in part trace his faith in force, sheer force. "Numbers create *surprise* in the enemy's ranks, as well as the conviction that he cannot resist." Here, stripped of ornamentation, is the keystone of his fabric of war. Despite his just emphasis on *preparation*, he underestimated the need for deception and distraction—the *drawing away and apart* of the enemy's force—in fulfilling this preparation.

Foch's second book, *De la Conduite de la Guerre*, opens with a repetition of his view that battle is the only argument in modern war, and the object of all strategy. But it becomes a better book. One cause, although not the only cause, of this development is that its scope is limited in accord with its limited theme. For it is a detailed study of a particular case—the first phase of the war of 1870 as waged within the narrow confines of the Franco-German frontier. The study has great interest

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and practical value as a day-by-day examination of the working of a strategist's mind.

Moltke is here put under Foch's microscope. And the fact that he was a strategist, not merely a tactician, leads to an enlargement of Foch's own view. Moltke certainly aimed to overthrow the French armies, but he made Paris his ultimate objective. Thither all his moves converged, and toward its capture his plans were directed—because he regarded the capital as the nerve-centre of the French people. Once it was numbed their resistance, he calculated, would collapse. It proved a just calculation.

Hence Foch, studying Moltke, is led to recognise the necessity and value of giving strategy a moral objective—in the background at least. (A generation later, when he has experience both of war and of its new weapon, aircraft, he will put this objective in the foreground.) He appreciates, too, the logical deduction from the fact that the victories of Metz and Sedan did not lead at once to peace—obviously, the overthrow of the enemy's main army did not suffice. And yet in this case the overthrow had a completeness rarely paralleled in history.

Foch thus comes to recognise, better than many of his contemporaries, the value of the People's Rising that Gambetta organised. He sees that it had a real chance of retrieving the defeat of the organised armies. He argues that the French leaders should have minimised the moral importance of their capital, dissociating it from the fortune of the country as a whole. This thought leads to another, to the suggestion that in the future the industrial regions, rich agricultural districts, and great ports, on which the armies depend for supply will become the new "national objectives" rather than the capital. It might be claimed for Foch that here he anticipated the theory now upheld by exponents of air strategy.

Foch also inclines to the opinion that the political objective should guide the direction of the military operations. The German armies should so manoeuvre as to separate the French from Paris, not to drive them back upon it. The French should take Mayence as their objective on the way to Berlin, because Mayence "is the point where the interests of the north and

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those of the south converge and in consequence divide. Our strategy in seeking the great battle . . . will thus not manœuvre indifferently by the right or by the left, but in such a way as to throw the enemy armies away from the direction of Mayence, and then to cut them off from the road to Berlin."

The task of following Moltke through the campaign of 1870, and the necessity of understanding the policy which governed strategy, had momentarily lifted Foch's mind above the battlefield and out of the tactical rut into which professional soldiers are apt, through their training, to slip. If this enlargement of his horizon came through an extensive study of 1870, the most purely military of campaigns, how much greater might have been its expansion if he had similarly studied other wars? What benefit might he not have reaped from the American Civil War in particular?—so long as he avoided the British pitfall of imagining that this war was fought out in the Shenandoah Valley.

Space forbids, and humanity forbids, that we should ask the reader to accompany us through Foch's detailed study of Moltke in August, 1870. For his material, Foch owed much to the German criticism of this campaign, which, under the pioneer guidance of Captain Hoenig, had uncovered the real foundations beneath the stucco of the German General Staff history. While generous in his praise of Moltke and, even more, of the troop-leaders he had trained, Foch made good use of the errors of appreciation and action which historical criticism had disclosed. From them he drew practical lessons. From them, also, he drew a moral to enhance the moral outlook for France in another war. For the suggestion constantly underlying his argument is that the French need not have been beaten if they had utilised the opportunities which German error opened to them. Hence the motto which he gives in his preface—" *In memoriam; in spem!* "

The German fault he emphasises most is that of acting on preconceived ideas instead of on ascertained knowledge. Moltke based his plan on what he reasoned that the French, as rational opponents, would do. He suffered dislocations of plan, only restored by the initiative of the troop-leaders, because the French

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command proved irrational and incapable in its actions. An ignorant swordsman may prove more dangerous to a master than a mediocre one—because his sword-play is less calculable. His very ignorance endows him with the supreme element of the unexpected.

The main lesson that Foch draws is naturally that of *sûreté*—of finding and fixing. He compares Moltke's method unfavourably with that of Napoleon, in the lack of a general advanced guard and in the directness of his attack: "Napoleon turning the enemy army *before* the battle with the *bulk* of his army, which he has reassembled, and only attacking then; Moltke turning the adversary *during* the battle with a part of his forces; . . . the reassembling of his means taking place on the battlefield through the convergence of columns. The first pursues *more surely* a victory *more fruitful*. . . ." Foch recognises that under modern conditions, with large armies in a cramped space, the Napoleonic manœuvre against the lines of communication became more difficult, if of even greater potential effect. The railways enable the bulk of the forces to be rushed immediately to the frontier, thus tending to a frontal clash, and the very desire to be ready first leads to a predetermined and inelastic line of advance. To these conditions, Foch suggests, Moltke's "more prosaic manœuvre" may be traced. But he argues that the further development of the network of railways since 1870 has revived the scope for Napoleonic combinations, making possible "a last hour concentration, creating *ipso facto* the element of surprise, in the Napoleonic style, if to this elastic use of the railways is added combination of the road-marches."

Foch thus favours the formation of an army of manœuvre pivoting on the rail axis rather than a preconceived detrainment and deployment. In contrast to the last, and to the plans of campaign which were actually followed in 1914, it may be fairly claimed that Foch's was a far-sighted conception—not a preconception. As he truly said, a preconceived manœuvre, even though intended to turn the enemy's flank, "leads to a purely linear strategy."

But because of this reasoning Foch was led to make a forecast of the German plan, in a future war, that proved false. This

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forecast is outlined in one of the book's most interesting passages. In it he controverted those who were saying that the Germans would come through Belgium in order to avoid the French fortress barrier. "That is not likely, for the concentration should have as its first object the assembly of all the forces in the shortest time possible; it requires the fullest possible employment of the railways, detraining stations, etc. It will thus be made, unquestionably and solely, in the region that is best equipped." The German concentration would therefore be in Alsace-Lorraine, as it was superior in this respect to the lower Rhine. At the time he wrote, this difference existed, and so his contemporary argument was sound in theory. He also added other military reasons against the Belgian line of advance: that the Germans would have to "weaken themselves by leaving detachments in front of Antwerp or at Brussels"; and that they would give the French a chance to attack them in flank with full force—provided that the French "assembled in a single mass" round a rail axis that enabled them to pivot for a blow "north, east, or south." This axis should be "a point on the line Château-Salins to Clermont-Ferrand"—a suggestion which implies a zone of assembly well back from the frontier.

Because of this qualification as to the French plan, it is not fair to judge Foch's forecast in the light of 1914. For the French plan did not fulfil his condition, and we cannot tell what the result would have been if it had. But it is a fair criticism that the virtue of his assembly plan depended on a defensive-offensive strategy, whereas his general teaching fanned the offensive spirit that inspired the plan of 1914, while devoting no study to the counter-offensive. Moreover, his dismissal of the idea that the Germans would come through Belgium verged on the very type of preconception he denounced. They would not come that way because it was not theoretically sound, because it did not accord with his principle. But what was the value of that principle if in practice the French fortress line was invulnerable to direct attack? Whatever the strategic difficulties, any alternative would be better than a tactical impossibility. All obstacles are more surmountable, all problems more soluble, than those of human resistance. To such a practical conclusion the

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German General Staff had, indeed, come while Foch was expounding his principle. In Foch's conclusion we discern the effect of his innate tendency to confound the practicable with the desirable, the real with the ideal. And this tendency in turn came because he did not keep his feet firmly enough on the groundwork of war, the means of offence and defence.

It is just to recognise that he had more technical foresight than many of his contemporaries. He advocated—and predicted—the use of heavy artillery in the field, instead of reserving it for siege operations; he urged the development of all new weapons which might increase the power of the offensive. But what he failed to see truly was the way that modern weapons would reinforce the defence, and the effect of this reinforcement upon his theory of strategy and tactics. Whilst looking ahead along the path, the too narrow path, pointed out by Clausewitz, Foch failed to look carefully at the ground beneath his feet. And thus he, like blinder men, fell into a ditch—the ditch that stretched from the Swiss frontier to the English Channel.

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